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CAN IT BE FALSE?

BY JOHN F. HOUSE.

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PREFACE.

THE writer prefers no claim to novelty or originality in the subject or the manner of its treatment contained in the following pages. He has merely made an effort to reduce to writing some considerations which he trusts have not been devoid of benefit to him; and this little volume is given to the public in the hope that it may fall into the hands of some to whom its perusal will not prove altogether irksome and unprofitable.

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Can It Be False?

I.

Jesus of Nazareth.

Nothing could more profoundly emphasize the complete separation of the kingdoms of this world from the kingdom which is not of this world than the almost unbroken silence of secular history upon the subject of the Christian religion during the first hundred years of its existence upon earth. If we were compelled to look to that source alone to ascertain the origin and tenets of Christianity for the first century of the Christian era, we should be forced to retire from the search with no greater knowledge of how it originated and what it assumed to teach than when

the investigation began. Yet its advent marked the beginning of the most permanent and far-reaching revolution in human thought and human destiny that has ever affected the life of man or molded the fate of nations.

If we were driven to the same source of information, for the same period, for an account of the birth and life and character of the Founder of this mighty revolution, we should turn from the silent pages of secular history in despair. On such totally different lines did the kingdom of Christ and the kingdoms of this world proceed that the literary men of the period named deemed the new religion as scarcely worthy of a passing notice or a paragraph on the pages of history. Only three Roman authors—Tacitus, Suetonius, and the younger Pliny, who lived and wrote

about the close of the first and the beginning of the second century of the Christian era—mention Christianity at all, and they make merely incidental allusion to it as a mischievous and hurtful superstition, and evidently regarded it as beneath the dignity of the muse of history to give any detailed account of its origin, or even a summary of the teachings or creed held by what they seem to have regarded as an insignificant and vulgar sect. The contempt felt for the sect is even more strongly emphasized by their greater silence in reference to the life of its Founder.

It may not prove entirely uninstructive to some lay readers to recall just what and how much these authors had to say about the Christians and their religion.

Tacitus, in giving an account of the

burning of Rome in the reign of Nero—a conflagration for which that cruel tyrant was himself suspected at the time to have been responsible—says: "Nero, to get rid of the rumor, substituted as the criminals, and punished with the most exquisite torture, those persons, odious for shameful practices, whom the vulgar called Christians. Christ, the author of that name, was punished by the procurator, Pontius Pilate, in the reign of Tiberius; and the deadly superstition, repressed for awhile, broke out again not only through Judea, the original seat of the evil, but through the city also, whither from every side all things horrible or shameful flow together and come into vogue. First, some were arrested who made confession; then, by the information obtained from them, a great multitude were found guilty, not

so much of burning the city as of a hatred of the human race. Even in their dying they were made sport of: some covered with skins of beasts, that they might be mangled to death with dogs; others nailed to crosses; others condemned to the flames, and when the day went down, they were burned for illumination in the night. Nero had offered his own gardens for that spectacle, and gave at the same time a circus exhibition, going about himself among the rabble in the dress of a charioteer, *or* actually driving a chariot. The consequence was that, although the sufferers were wicked and worthy of extreme punishment, commiseration was awakened, as if they suffered, not from any consideration of the public welfare, but for the gratification of one man's cruelty."

It will be observed from this merely

incidental reference by Tacitus to the Christians that four facts appear: First, they took their name of Christians from Christ, as the Author of their religion; second, this Christ was executed by Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius; third, the "deadly superstition," as he denominates the Christian religion, had its origin in Judea; fourth, although repressed for a time after the death of its Founder, this new religion broke out again, and spread not only through Judea, where it first arose, but through the city of Rome itself—all in perfect harmony with the sacred record.

But the historian does not deem the despised sect of sufficient importance to trouble himself to ascertain or record what their creed or manner of life was. He says they were "odious for shameful practices," but what those practices

were which he stigmatizes as shameful he does not deign to tell us, any more than if he had been writing of so many dogs, whose habits could not be regarded as otherwise than vile and degrading from their very nature. He says some were first arrested who made confession, and on their evidence a great multitude were found guilty, not so much of burning the city—a charge which Nero, to cover his own infamy, had brought against them—as of a hatred of the human race. This is a very broad charge, unexplained and unrelieved by a single specification, and based wholly on the testimony of a set of informers who, to escape the cruelty of Nero and to save their own lives, doubtless furnished to order all the testimony necessary to avert the tyrant's wrath from themselves. The idea of

their being enemies of the human race* in all probability had its origin in the rebuke which the pure spirit of their religion administered to the unbridled appetites and licentiousness of the age. The slaughter was so great, the punishment so cruel and inhuman, that the public sympathy was aroused in behalf of even the despised and humble Christians; and the people came to believe

*The author has followed the common translation of Tacitus, but it is highly probable that this version is incorrect. By charging the Christians with "a hatred of the human race" the Roman historian would have contradicted all the testimony of antiquity. Did Tacitus make this charge? His words are: "*Quam odio humani generis convicti sunt,*" which may be rendered, "were convicted of being the *objects* of the *hatred* of the human race." "*In odio esse,*" according to Cicero, expresses the *object* of hatred, and the text in this place ("Annals of Tacitus," b. 15, l. 44) should be rendered accord-

that the holocaust was made not so much to free society from a dangerous and wicked element as to cover the crime of the imperial incendiary and to gratify the cruelty of the sceptered monster. This conflagration of the city is known to have occurred Anno Domini 64. Tacitus wrote forty years after this barbarous persecution of the Christians in Rome by Nero, and gives not a single fact on which he bases the dis-

ingly. This reading gives additional strength to the argument of our author, and furnishes a clear fulfillment of the prophecy of our Lord in St. Matthew x. 22, repeated in Matthew xxiv. 9, by St. Mark xiii. 13, and St. Luke xxi. 17: "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake." This record of a fulfillment of prophecy in the pages of a Roman historian is one of the evidences of the truth of Christianity that has been strangely overlooked by many commentators on the Holy Scriptures.—EDITOR.

creditable and opprobrious epithets which he is pleased to apply to them. Unfriendly rumor and a prevailing popular prejudice were doubtless the only authority he had for his degrading characterization of a humble people, whose chief crime consisted in being better and purer than the age in which they lived and suffered.

In his "Life of Nero" Suetonius makes a mere passing allusion to the followers of Christ, whom he designates as "the Christians, a sort of men (*genus hominum*) of a new and wicked superstition, who were severely punished."

What evidence did Suetonius have that the Christians were believers in an evil or hurtful superstition? If he had condescended to tell us what their belief was, perhaps we would have differed with him as to the justice of the

character he has seen fit to assign it. But in all probability he never felt interest enough in the subject to trouble himself with inquiring as to what they believed, and if called upon would have been unable to state correctly a single article in their creed. Be this as it may, he wrote forty or fifty years after this persecution by Nero, and gives no facts and furnishes no *data* in support of what he says, evidently contenting himself, like Tacitus, with simply echoing a current prejudice, not deeming the subject worthy of any greater consideration than is contained in his brief and flippant allusion to it.

Pliny, called the Younger to distinguish him from his uncle of that name, wrote in the beginning of the second century of the Christian era. He throws more light upon the subject than can be

extracted from the pages of either Tacitus or Suetonius, though the information to be gathered from him lacks much of being commensurate with the importance of the subject. In one of his official communications to Trajan he refers certain questions to that emperor, which had arisen in the province where Pliny was administering the government, relative to the punishment of Christians brought before him for trial. He says, in writing to Trajan: "It is my custom, sir, to refer every thing about which I am in doubt to you; for who can better direct my hesitation or remove my ignorance? I have never been present in any judicial investigation of Christians, so that I am ignorant in what manner and to what extent it is usual to punish them or to examine them. I have also been quite unable to decide

whether there is any discrimination on account of difference in age, or those who are of tender years are treated in the same way with the more robust; whether pardon is given to those who repent, or if one has been at any time a Christian it is nothing in his favor that he has ceased to be such; whether the mere name is punished, or only those shameful practices connected with the name. Meanwhile, in the case of those who have been accused before me of being Christians, I have taken this course: I have put the question to them whether they were Christians. To those who confessed I have put the question again, and the third time threatening them with punishment. Those who persevered in that confession I ordered to be taken to execution, for I did not doubt that, whatever the nature of their

confession might be, their pertinacity and inflexible obstinacy ought to be punished. There have been some possessed with that sort of madness, whom, because they were Roman citizens, I have set down in the list of those who must be sent to Rome. Soon, as often happens, the proceedings having caused the accusation to spread in all directions, there came to be many sorts of cases. An anonymous indictment was offered containing many names. I have thought proper to discharge those who deny that they are or have been Christians, when they repeated after me a prayer to the gods, and offered worship, with incense and wine, to your *statue* (which for that purpose I have ordered to be brought with the images of the deities), and, besides all that, reviled Christ; *which things those who are really Christians can*

not, it is said, be forced to do. Others, named by an informer, said they were Christians, and immediately denied it; they said that they had been, but had ceased to be, Christians—some three, some more, and a few even twenty years ago. These all venerated your statue and the images of the gods; they also reviled Christ. But they affirmed that the sum whether of their crime or their error was this: that they used to meet on a stated day before light, and to sing among themselves in turn a hymn to Christ as to a god, and to bind themselves by an oath not to any wickedness, but that they would never commit theft, robbery, or adultery; that they would never break their word; that they would never deny a trust when called to give it up; and after these performances their way was to separate

and then meet again to partake of food, but only of an ordinary and harmless kind. Even this, they said, they had given up after my edict, by which, according to your orders, I had prohibited clubs.

"Having heard so much, I deemed it the more necessary to ascertain the truth by putting to the torture two women-servants who were called deaconesses, but found nothing more than a perverse and excessive superstition. Therefore, having postponed the investigation, I betake myself to you for advice; for the affair seems to me to require such consultation, especially because of the number of persons implicated; for many of every age, of every rank, and of both sexes are also summoned to trial, and will be summoned; for the contagion of that superstition has pervaded not only

cities, but villages, and also farms. It can be, I think, resisted and corrected. At least, it is evident enough that the temples, which a little while ago were forsaken, have begun to be frequented, and sacred observances long intermitted are renewed; and the flesh of sacrifices, for which of late a purchaser could rarely be found, is now sold everywhere. And this makes it easy to think how many might be reformed, if repentance can gain pardon."

To this letter, which is given entire, on account of its highly suggestive and interesting character, the Emperor Trajan made the following reply:

"You have adopted the right course in investigating the charges made against the Christians who were brought before you. It is not possible to lay down any general rule for all such cases.

Do not go out of your way to look for them. If they are brought before you, and the offense is proved, you must punish them, but with the restriction that when the person denies that he is a Christian, and shall make it evident that he is not by invoking the gods, he is to be pardoned, notwithstanding any former suspicion against him. Anonymous informations ought not to be received in any sort of prosecution. It is introducing a very dangerous precedent, and is quite foreign to the spirit of our age."

Although Pliny seems not to have concerned himself about the source or origin of the new religion, yet his duties as a conscientious magistrate led him to make some inquiry as to its character and the habits and practices of those who professed it, and, so far as his in-

vestigation went in this direction, the result was highly creditable to the subjects of his inquiry. One thing is very evident from his letter: the Christian religion had become widely disseminated among the people of even the distant provinces of Bithynia and Pontus over which he presided as governor, to which position he had been appointed A.D. 103, in the sixth year of the reign of the Emperor Trajan. Indeed, he says in so many words that the persons accused before him of being Christians embraced all ranks and ages. He was at a loss to know how to dispose of the many cases that came before him, and when his investigations satisfied him that there was much alleged against those Christians for which there was no foundation in fact, he determined to proceed slowly and cautiously in the

premises until he could hear from Rome. Although he had evidently heard of Christians before he left Rome to assume his position as governor of the two provinces, and that they were tried and punished for some offense, he seems never to have attended any such trials or to have taken sufficient interest in the subject to inquire for what they were tried, or what punishment it was usual to inflict upon them. He was therefore wholly at sea as to what he ought to do with such cases when they were brought before him. He was ignorant as to whether the mere profession of Christianity was a crime usually punished at Rome, or whether it was necessary to convict the accused of some criminal or wicked act. It would be amusing, but for the serious consequences to the poor creatures brought before

him, to note the course he concluded to take in his total ignorance of what he ought to do toward such as refused to recant and revile Christ. He first asked them if it were true that they were Christians; if they confessed that they were, he asked them a second time, and if they still adhered to the confession, he put the question a third time, threatening them with punishment. If they still persisted in claiming to be Christians, he ordered them to be taken to execution. "For," he adds in all seriousness, "I did not doubt that, whatever the nature of their confession might be, their pertinacity and inflexible obstinacy ought to be punished." In other words, as he was confessedly ignorant of what ought to be done in such cases according to the usages of the Roman Empire, he concluded that the

best thing to be done with the refractory, or those who refused to renounce their religion, after graciously extending to them an opportunity to repent, was to have them killed. This was certainly an heroic remedy on the part of the man who freely admits that he did not know what punishment ought to be inflicted on them, or whether according to law they ought to be punished at all. And yet Pliny was not naturally a cruel or blood-thirsty man. On the contrary, he was a man noted for kindness and humanity. The tenor of his whole letter to Trajan evinces a disposition on his part to avoid as far as possible the infliction of cruel and unnecessary punishment. His biographer says of him: "It would not be easy to find in ancient literature, or indeed in modern, one who approaches more closely to the

best modern ideal of a well-bred, cultivated, blameless gentleman." And yet, as has been seen, this model gentleman, when acting in his capacity as a magistrate, in cases where he is confessedly ignorant of what ought to be done, in order to be on the safe side orders the accused to be taken to execution. Could any thing display in a more glaring light the total absence of all rights on the part of the humble people of the provinces, which a Roman magistrate felt himself bound to respect? Occasionally there were brought before him those who were able to interpose the shield of Roman citizenship, and in such cases the provincial governor was compelled to pause and send the accused to Rome for trial. It will be remembered that St. Paul was forced, in order to save his life, to plead his privilege as a Ro-

man citizen. But the humble and lowly Christian who could not claim such protection was absolutely at the mercy of the civil magistrate, and the only terms on which he could hope to live were to renounce his religion, revile Christ, and perform acts of worship to the gods and the emperor. It soon came to be well known and generally understood that this was the crucial test, and that those who were really Christians could not be induced, either by the hope of earthly reward or the fear of temporal punishment, to revile Christ or worship the gods. Pliny evidently thought that one who was willing to revile Christ and worship the Emperor was not a very dangerous Christian, and could therefore with safety to the State be discharged without punishment. Trajan well understood the fidelity of the true

Christian to his faith and to Christ, and hence in his reply told Pliny that whenever those accused before him were willing to revile Christ and worship the gods they must not be punished, whatever suspicions may have attached to them of being Christians. He accepted, and felt safe in accepting, a revilement of Christ and an act of worship to the gods as sufficient and conclusive evidence that the one willing to perform such acts was not a Christian, whatever evidence may have existed against him in the past. Such an act was regarded as ample indemnity for any alleged wickedness in the past and satisfactory security for future loyalty to the gods and the emperor. The case of the venerable Polycarp will occur in this connection, who, when he was urged to revile Christ to save his life, made this

remarkable reply: "Six and eighty years have I served him, and he has done me nothing but good, and how could I curse him, my Lord and Saviour? If you would know what I am, I tell you frankly I am a Christian."

It may be justly remarked in regard to this entire correspondence between Pliny and Trajan that it evinces an impression on the part of both that there was nothing in the lives and conduct of the humble followers of Christ likely to prove dangerous to the State or hurtful to society. "Do not go out of your way to look for them," says Trajan. That Pliny was not disposed to hunt them down is made manifest from the fact that he is careful to state in his letter to the emperor that some had confessed before him that they had been Christians at some period in the past,

but had renounced that religion, but while they were professed Christians they were in the habit of doing nothing worse than worshiping Christ as a God and pledging themselves to an upright and commendable life. He also relates to him, evidently with a view to propitiate the emperor's favor in behalf of those persecuted people, whom he doubtless regarded as more sinned against than sinning, the fact that, in order to test what there was in all the great outcry against these Christians, he had caused two female slaves who were said to officiate in their religious rites to be put to the torture, but could discover nothing but an "absurd and extravagant superstition." One may read between the lines of his entire letter a disbelief in the charges preferred against the poor Christians who were being dragged

before him, and their punishment demanded by malevolent and interested informers. He concludes his letter with the opinion that, if a lenient and forgiving policy be pursued, many of those deluded Christians can be won back to the worship of the gods. He mentions one fact very suggestive of the extent to which this new religion had spread among the mixed population of which his provinces were composed. Before the persecution commenced, and men and women were compelled to surrender their religion or their lives, the temples of the gods had become in a great measure abandoned, and the demand for victims for sacrifice so small that those who raised them for sale for that purpose could find but few purchasers. The market for those victims was thus destroyed, and in all probabil-

ity the most active and zealous informers against the Christians were those who saw their traffic impaired by the silent hand that had closed the temples of the gods and thus cut off the demand for victims to be offered as sacrifices upon their altars. Pliny had been an advocate of great distinction at Rome. He had lived through the Roman reign of terror under Domitian, and had become thoroughly familiar with the character and methods of the hordes of informers who, under that detestable dynasty, had made life a burden to nearly every man of worth and merit who had the misfortune to bear a good name and a spotless reputation. His extensive law practice in Rome had afforded him ample opportunities to become acquainted with the unscrupulous wiles and crooked ways of those pests

of evil times, and he felt a profound disgust and contempt for the whole vile and vicious brood. He must therefore have felt but little inclined to punish even the lowly Christians, of whose religion he knew but little and cared less, upon the testimony and at the instance of those social scavengers and moral lepers, who, he very well knew, would hesitate at no falsehood and scruple at no means to compass their selfish and nefarious purposes and ends. That he threw over the helpless creatures who were accused before him by those informers and self-constituted and officious detectives such protection as a sense of official propriety and duty would permit him to extend is fairly inferable from all the surroundings of the situation. Under the rule of Domitian he had witnessed the banishment of some

of his best and most distinguished friends, victims of the army of informers that made the latter part of that execrable monster's reign the most horrible period in Roman history, more dreadful even than the worst years of Nero's bloody and brutal domination. In describing these last and fearful years of Domitian's rule, Tacitus says, "Even peace was full of horrors," and thus continues: "The sea was crowded with exiles, and its rocks were polluted with bloody deeds. In the capital were yet more dreadful cruelties. Nobility, wealth, the refusal or the acceptance of office were grounds of accusation, and virtue insured destruction. The rewards of the informers were no less odious than their crimes; for while some seized on consulships and priestly offices as their share of the spoils, others on procura-

torships and posts of more confidential authority, they robbed and plundered in every direction amid universal hatred and terror. Slaves were bribed to turn against their masters, and freedmen to betray their patrons, and those who had no personal enemies were destroyed by their friends."

One who had gone through such scenes as are here depicted, especially a man of Pliny's instincts and principles and culture, would naturally imbibe a horror and detestation of the very name of informer, and when these vultures of his province flocked around him to prey on the defenseless Christians, they found in the governor a magistrate who knew their kind too well to feel much disposed to gratify their greed and malice or lend a ready and willing ear to their deceit and falsehood. It

was fortunate for the persecuted Christians that their fate was in the hands of one who had had so many opportunities to know and so many reasons to hate the vile avocation of the informer.

On his second missionary journey St. Paul, about fifty years before Pliny wrote his letter to Trajan, passed through the southern portion of Bithynia, over which, as has been seen, Pliny afterward presided. Were not the Christians of whom Pliny speaks, and who were brought before him for trial, the fruits of the seed sown in that distant province by the great apostle on his second missionary tour?

The foregoing extracts from the works of Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny embrace the entire contribution of secular history to the rise and progress and character of the Christian religion for

the first century of its existence. This is all the more remarkable when we consider the age in which Christ was born and his religion arose. It was the Augustan age of Roman literature. The lyres of Horace, of Virgil, and of Ovid had hardly ceased to vibrate when Christ was born. The period immediately preceding the birth of Christ and the century succeeding that great but unrecorded event were distinguished for the number of literary men whose works adorned the annals of the empire, many of which, defying the ravages of time and the effacing fingers of oblivion, still survive to enlist our interest and challenge our admiration. Many of the provincial cities, as well as the city of Rome, contained literary men of distinction, as well as colleges and learned institutions of a high order.

It was not because there were no men of letters or literary attainments during the infancy of Christianity that such a silence in regard to its character and progress was observed in the writings of that period. It moved on a plane and dealt with matters about which the writers of that day concerned themselves but little. The kingdom of God came without observation. Silently and softly, like the dews of night, Christianity imperceptibly spread through the world, infusing its principles and spirit into the human heart as a benediction. Abstaining from all interference or entangling alliance with civil government, invoking no aid from human authority, antagonizing no laws or regulations of the State, with noiseless footsteps it went everywhere, offering the glad tidings to all—the rich and the poor, the

learned and the ignorant, the mighty and lowly—on precisely the same terms and conditions. It held the same language to Cæsar on his throne and the meanest slave that trembled at his power. It carried its blessed message of peace and consolation to the hovels of poverty and the palaces of the rich alike. Like its Author, it was no respecter of persons. It proclaimed God as the universal Father of the human race, Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the whole world, and all nations and kindred and tongues as one family. The line of demarkation between the Church and the State was clearly and distinctly drawn. Its disciples were enjoined to obey the laws of the government under which they lived, and to respect the law-makers as ordained of God. They were commanded to give unto Cæsar

the things that were Cæsar's, and unto God the things that were God's. Interference with political or civil affairs constituted no part of the duty of those who were commissioned to bear the tidings of salvation to the world. "On earth peace, good-will toward men" was the burden of the message they were commanded to deliver. Nero might make bonfires of the bodies of Christians to light up the darkness of night, but the power that upheld and stood in reserve to support and preserve the kingdom of Jesus Christ was beyond the reach of the Cæsars and mightier than the tread of the invincible legions that had caused every other knee to bow and every other power to pay tribute to Rome. What was the power mightier than Rome, which even in the infancy of its being lived on and

moved upon its path of conquest in spite of the mailed hand that nailed its Author to the cross, and made bonfires of the bodies of his followers? What *imperium in imperio* was it that dared to live when Rome bade it die; that entered even the palace of Cæsar without knocking at the door? "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth." Titus, confounding Christianity with Judaism, destroyed Jerusalem in the vain hope that he would bury this strange new power beneath the ruins of the temple. The temple fell, but Christianity remained, its fires unextinguished and its spirit unsubdued. The imperial edicts of the empire were aimed for centuries at its very heart, but Christianity lived on and continued

to spread through and even beyond the limits of the empire, sustained and supported by an unseen hand, an invisible force which refused to retreat or surrender. Rome had encountered a new and unaccustomed foe; a silent, unseen power that baffled the skill of her generals and the prowess of her armies; a power that, so far from beseeching the mistress of the world for the privilege to exist and control the destinies of men, lived and moved and shaped the current of events and the history of the world in spite of all the swords that were unsheathed to slay it, and all the powers that were marshaled to overcome it.

A humble peasant reared amid the sequestered hills of Nazareth, in an obscurity so dense and a seclusion so deep that no one knew of him save his daily associates of the same lowly rank and

fortune, established a kingdom in the world that has outlived the fall of dynasties and the decay of empires. To borrow a figure: "Jesus rose like the sun in noiseless stillness." His only herald was the rugged Baptist, with his raiment of camel's-hair, as he lifted the trumpet of repentance on the banks of the Jordan. And when, for his fearless reproof of sin and his bold proclamation of the truth, John was thrown into prison, and from its depressing gloom sent his disciples to Jesus to know if he was really the Messiah or whether the Messiah was still to come, the following is the answer he received: "Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached

to them." The lame, the blind, the deaf, the leper, the dead, the poor, the lowly! Ever before did one proposing to found a kingdom put such an army into the field to achieve a conquest and establish his dominion? With what contempt would Alexander have reviewed such an army, and how would Cæsar or Napoleon have laughed to scorn such a muster-roll as that! With what a sneer of incredulity would Rome have received an announcement that the leader of that band of ungainly and ragged invalids was destined to establish a kingdom that would spread to lands where even the name of Rome had never been heard! But where is Alexander now? Where is Cæsar now? Where is Napoleon now? Lifeless skeletons, standing on their cold and crumbling pedestals in the silent halls of history!

They left a name at which the world grew pale,
To point a moral or adorn a tale.

Where is Rome now? The very eagles have faded from her ensigns, and her name stands inscribed on the broken column that records the downfall of empires! And where is the humble Captain that led his little band of lowly followers over the hills of Judea and by the Sea of Galilee—a sad, homeless wanderer on earth—where the foxes had holes and the birds of the air had nests, but where he had no place he could call his own on which to lay his head? He lives in millions of human hearts with the undecaying vigor of an immortal life, and the sun sets not on all the lands that contain his worshipers! He came to establish a kingdom, but the seat of empire was the human heart. It was not of this world, and to this

world belongs none of the glory of the achievement. Her rulers and potentates threw him not even a word of encouragement in his struggles, her armies furnished him not a soldier, her treasuries not a dollar, her arsenals not a weapon, and her priests not a prayer! He bore the burden of her scorn while he lived, and she contributed a cross and a crown of thorns to decorate the ignominious death to which she consigned him. Born in an obscurity so dense, and moving on a plane so humble and unambitious that the literature of his day did not deem his birth or his life worthy of the most casual mention, his name stands to-day the foremost in all history for the results achieved as well as the manner of their achievement. Far in advance of all other men who have ever lived in the mighty in-

fluences that he put in motion to sway the world and shape the destinies of men, he threw aside as unworthy to be utilized all the appliances and methods by which others had gained an ascendency over their fellows and won the chaplet of renown. Everywhere and upon all occasions he utterly refused to countenance, either by word or action, any idea or suggestion of political power for himself. He flattered no man's vanity or ambition or cupidity to induce him to enlist under his banner. At no time, under no circumstances did he ever hold out to any man, high or low, Jew or Gentile, any promise or prospect or hope of earthly preferment or distinction to induce him to become his disciple. On the contrary, when men came to him voluntarily and proposed to follow him, it seemed as if he

would discourage them from doing so. He gave them to understand clearly and unmistakably that he had no lands or houses or money or lucrative positions to bestow, and if their object in seeking to ally their fortunes with him was to better their worldly condition, he had no hope or promise or prospect to hold out in that direction. When a question as to who should be greatest in his kingdom arose among his disciples, who as yet had a very imperfect conception of his real mission on earth, he took a little child, and, placing it in their midst, said to them that unless they became as that little child, into whose innocent life no dream of ambition or scheme of self-seeking had ever come, they could not enter his kingdom. Was he trying to so discourage his followers as to make them desert

him? Such lessons must have sounded strangely in their ears. Yet the only reward he offered his followers was rest for their souls here and eternal life hereafter, to be obtained through consecration and self-denial on their part. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me: for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

O where shall rest be found—
Rest for the weary soul?

This anxious question had struggled out of the heart of humanity from the infancy of time. The aspiration for something higher, better, holier than himself had stirred the heart of man in all ages. Here was one who promised to give the long-coveted boon, the long-sought rest. To have extended

such an invitation and made such a promise without conscious ability to perform it would have been a mockery and a solemn trifling with the wants and woes of man, of which even his enemies must admit Jesus was incapable. And besides it put *his religion to a test*, which it must be able to stand or be doomed to speedy contempt and ignominious failure. To illustrate: There is a famine in the land, and thousands are perishing for food. Just across the border of the famine-stricken region there lies a country whose ruler says to the sufferers: "Come to me. I have an abundance of food to supply your wants and relieve your hunger. Come over, and you shall have all the supplies you need." The wagon-trains are put in motion to transport to the famishing thousands the meat and corn necessary

to sustain life. On arriving at their destination, instead of having their wagons filled with the desired articles of food, they find no corn or meat, and are compelled to return to their starving families empty. No other train would ever go into that ruler's dominions for corn, and he who had promised them relief in their sore need, and raised expectations to be so cruelly disappointed, would be denounced as a fraud and cursed as one who had laughed at their distress and mocked them in their misery.

A city is infected with yellow fever, and hundreds are dying daily. A physician appears on the scene who announces that he has a specific which will cure the sick and stay the steps of the pestilence. The stricken people flock to him for relief, and find none.

The work of death goes on as before. Of course he is denounced as a charlatan, and the deceived and disappointed people give no further heed to his vain and empty babblings.

To such tests as these did Christ put his religion. If those who had gone to him, trusting to his promise to give them rest for their souls, had been turned empty away, and had found that he who claimed to be a physician of souls possessed no remedy, long since they would have ceased to go to him, and he and his religion would have been relegated to the shades of forgotten impostors and exploded frauds. Col. Robert G. Ingersoll, a few years since, in a controversy with Judge Black, in speaking of the Christian religion used this language: "The dogmas of the past no longer reach the level of the highest thought nor *sat-*

isfy the hunger of the heart." This is not the first superficial remark that has escaped Col. Ingersoll in reference to the religion of Christ. If it was composed of dogmas, he would be right. The "hunger of the heart" can not be satisfied with such food. But that which distinguishes the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth from that of the priests and philosophers of Greece and Rome is its absolute freedom from dogma. His is a living, direct message to the hungry heart, which he himself proposes to feed and satisfy. He does not propose to turn it out to starve on the husks of dogmas and doctrines. Millions have tested his promise and declared it true. All along the march of the ages hungry hearts have received from his hand the bread of life and been satisfied. His religion still reigns a living power

in the human soul. It carries within itself, without any appeal for aid to dogmas and authority, the ability to demonstrate its truth to the conscious satisfaction of every heart that will open its doors to receive it. "Behold, *I* stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." This is the manner in which the hunger of the heart is to be appeased. No priest, with creed or dogma, is authorized to get between the hungry heart and the divine Messenger that comes to bring relief. Christ, so far from dealing in antiquated platitudes and moldy dogmas, promises to his followers, to each individual man who will accept the offered terms a new life in the soul which comes down from heaven—a life which the world can not

give and can not take away. He has opened up a way from every human heart to the bosom of God, on which the king and beggar have equal rights. On this great highway all have a right to travel free and unmolested. No human power has the right or the ability to close it or to prevent those who desire to do so from passing over it. It is the King's highway, and his supreme authority has declared it free to all. The body may be bound in chains, incarcerated in a dungeon, pinched with hunger, or burned at the stake; but all the power of all the tyrants that this world has ever seen, concentrated in one effort, can not keep the heavenly Comforter from visiting the humblest heart that beats in a human bosom. To each son of Adam the privilege is given which none can take away, to

Kneel down remote upon the simple sod,
And sue *in forma pauperis* to God.

That such a man as Jesus Christ lived and died no respectable authority denies. As we have seen, Tacitus says that he lived in the reign of Tiberius, gave to Christianity its name, and was slain under the orders of Pontius Pilate. Thus secular history contributes its authority to his personality, his life and death. There was a time when, in its effort to meet the stubborn facts of the case, infidel writers denied that Jesus was dead when he was taken from the cross—that he was only seemingly, not really, dead; that he swooned under the agony of his great suffering on the cross, and was to all appearances dead, but that he afterward revived, and that in fact he never tasted death. That his enemies intended to kill him is not

denied; that they supposed they had killed him is not disputed; but they were mistaken in their supposition, and thus failed in their purpose. Of course there is not a single fact upon which to base this improbable theory. It was put forth by Paulus, and other respectable authorities in the ranks of unbelief gave in their adhesion to it, but Strauss and Renan and other able infidel writers now discard it as utterly untenable. So it may be safely assumed that Jesus of Nazareth lived and *died.* But on the rock of Joseph's new tomb, where his body was laid after it was taken down from the cross, what inscription has infidelity chiseled? The story of the resurrection, says the unbeliever, is not, can not be true. He lies there in his grave nothing but a man, and a dead man at that, like the mill-

ions of the human race who have preceded and followed him to the tomb. There was no priest in the temple, no rabbi in all Jerusalem who did not believe, as his body was lowered from the cross and laid in the grave, that that was the end of him and the last of him. So thought even those who had been his followers and disciples. So thought Pilate, if, indeed, he gave the subject a thought, after he consented to his death. Looked at from a human stand-point, who could have thought any thing else? Why was it not the last of him? He was as dead as he lay in Joseph's tomb as any corpse that was ever laid out for its long repose. As his mutilated body lay in the cold embrace of death *there was not a square inch of parchment in the world that contained a line he had ever written!* He formulated no

creed, he left no Koran behind him. He came into the world to establish a kingdom which he called the kingdom of heaven. He disclaimed as unworthy, and discarded as unsuited to his purpose, all the means and methods and appliances by which other men had established kingdoms and founded empires. No sword was drawn in his behalf save the one the impetuous Peter drew in the garden, and which he was commanded by the Master to sheathe and never again take from its scabbard. He shed no blood save his own. While he lay in his grave where was his kingdom? In whose custody had he left its destiny? Who was to take up the work that had fallen from his pierced and bleeding hands as he hung upon the cross? Was it the blind man to whom he had given sight? Was it the para-

lytic through whose shriveled veins the ruby currents of life had poured at his command? Was it the miserable leper he had cleansed? Was it Peter and his fellow-fishermen? Was it the poor and humble among whom he had moved and with whom he had associated all his life? Are these the builders of kingdoms and the founders of empires? Yet the kingdom was established. It rises to-day, after the lapse of nearly nineteen hundred years, in grand and magnificent proportions—the wonder of the world and the hope and refuge of millions. "There was no resurrection," say his enemies. But there *was* a resurrection, even his enemies being judges. *His cause was raised up again.* No one denies or can deny *that* resurrection. By what power did it rise? When he died, as has been

seen, he left behind him no written line or precept save what he had inscribed on the humble hearts that listened to his teachings and turned to him for help and sympathy during the three or four years he went about through Galilee and around Jerusalem, in popular estimation a poor wayfarer who had wandered down from the secluded hills of Nazareth. As he lay in the tomb, where or with whom was deposited the mighty power that has shaken the world? The only cultivated or educated men that heard what he had to say while he lived were the scribes and Pharisees, who listened only to refute and criticise, and who watched him that they might discover something whereof to accuse him. He bought no man with money, for he had none. Neither he nor his had any ownership or interest in the manger

where he was born, nor any title to the grave in which he was buried. A penniless, houseless, homeless stranger; despised or unnoticed by the great, hated by the priesthood and doctors of the law, and in sympathy with the poor and humble like himself — whence came this strange man? and whither did he go? He came from the manger at Bethlehem, and went to Joseph's new tomb. There was no virtue in the rock of which his tomb was made that sent into the world the inspiration that has revolutionized its history. There was no virtue in the wood out of which his cross was fashioned that escaped into the air and turned the world upside down. Yet on the assumption that only a man lay in that tomb and died on the cross, it would be as reasonable to ascribe the mighty results which

have followed his life and death to the stone that composed his tomb or the wood out of which his cross was made as to any other cause which has been or can be suggested on such an hypothesis. His entrance upon the scene of human action introduced into the world a power that has produced effects far transcending the efforts of all other men. As Jean Paul Richter has said: "He lifted with his pierced hands empires off their hinges, and turned the stream of centuries out of its channel, and still governs the ages."

Said the great Napoleon: "I know men; and I tell you that Jesus is not a man. Every thing in him amazes me. His spirit outreaches mine, and his will confounds me. Comparison is impossible between him and any other being in the world. He is truly a being by

himself. His ideas and his sentiments, the truth that he announces, his manner of convincing—are all beyond humanity and the natural order of things. His birth and the story of his life; the profoundness of his doctrine, which overturns all difficulties and is their complete solution; his gospel; the singularity of his mysterious being; his appearance; his empire; his progress through all centuries and kingdoms—all this is to me a prodigy, an unfathomable mystery. I see nothing here of man. Near as I may approach, closely as I may examine, all remains above my comprehension—great with a greatness that crushes me. It is in vain that I reflect—all remains unaccountable. I defy you to cite another life like that of Christ." On another occasion, when conversing with those

around him on the island of St. Helena, and comparing himself with the heroes that had gone before him, he turned to one of his friends and said: "Can you tell me who Jesus Christ was?" The person thus addressed owned his inability to answer the question. "Well then," said the great hero, "I will tell you." After instituting a comparison between Christ and those whom the world has placed on its roll of great men, he proceeded: "I think I understand somewhat of human nature, and I tell you all these were men, and I am a man, but not one is like him. Christ was more than man. Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne, and myself founded great empires; but upon what did the creations of our genius depend? Upon force. Jesus alone founded his empire upon love, and to this very day millions would die for him."

Napoleon can not be classed as a follower or partisan of Christ. Recorded history bears upon its pages no two names of persons more diametrically opposite in all their aims, aspirations, and purposes than the great Napoleon and the lowly Nazarene.

Says Lecky in his "History of European Morals:" "It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character which through all the changes of eighteen centuries has inspired the hearts of men with an impassioned love; has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments, and conditions; has been not only the highest pattern of virtue, but the strongest incentive to its practice; and has exercised so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years

of active life has done more to regenerate and to soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers, and all the exhortations of moralists." Mr. Lecky can not be said to be a swift or partial witness for either Jesus or his religion.

In speaking of Jesus of Nazareth Renan says: "It will never be possible to surpass him in the matter of religion, whatever progress may be made in other branches of intellectual culture." And again says this eminent unbeliever: "Jesus shall become the corner-stone of humanity so entirely that to tear his name from this world would be to rend it to its foundations."

Christianity never had a more inveterate enemy than Strauss, yet candor compels him to say of Jesus: "He remains the highest model of religion within the reach of our thought, and no

perfect piety is possible without his presence in the heart." This testimony of unbelievers might be continued, but let these extracts suffice for the present.

We pick up the life of Julius Cæsar, and his biographer opens by saying: "Julius Cæsar was born B.C. 100." We open the life of the great Napoleon, and read: "Napoleon Bonaparte was born A.D. 1769." What power reached back one hundred years, when the greatest of the Cæsars was born, and forward nearly eighteen hundred years, when the great Napoleon first saw the light, and linked their natal days in historic annals to the morning when the peasant son of the poor carpenter, Joseph, was born in a manger? What had the great Cæsar or the great Napoleon to do with the Babe of Bethlehem, or the dead man that was buried in the new tomb

of Joseph of Arimathea? The countrymen of Cæsar knew nothing of him, cared nothing for him, and had nothing to do with him, save at the request of the Jews to kill him and put him out of the way. Why was he not forgotten with multitudes of other dead and forgotten impostors and fanatics hundreds of years before Napoleon opened his infant eyes upon his island home? What arm bore this name to an historic eminence that compelled the name of Julius Cæsar to look forward one hundred years and the name of Napoleon Bonaparte to look back eighteen hundred years, and do obeisance to the name of Jesus of Nazareth? Why is this name "above every other name?" St. Paul says: "God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of

Jesus every knee should bow." "God did it," says Paul. "But, this is not true," says the unbeliever. Well then, what is true? How did the wandering mendicant that lay dead in Joseph's tomb place his name where it stands to-day, high above all other names on the world's roster of immortality? As has been seen, he came into the world and went out of it without creating a sufficient ripple upon the surface of its affairs to attract the notice of its rulers, or even the tribute of a short biographical sketch from the pens of its historians or men of letters. But he brought with him and left behind him the seeds of a revolution whose vast influence upon human destiny and human history far transcends the achievements of all other men. From what repository of power did he obtain the seeds of that

revolution? and in what soil were they planted? How were the mighty results which are now seen and read of all men, from the rivers to the ends of the earth, produced? Who did it? what did it? It has been done. Nobody disputes or can deny that mighty fact. There it stands in its majestic proportions, and demands a solution. There is no trouble in explaining how Alexander and Hannibal and Napoleon founded their empires. The sword, the mighty armies they led to victory and conquest, tell the story of their achievements. But here is a man that drew no sword, that commanded no armies; who, emerging from his peasant hut amid the secluded hills, teaches only three years among the poor and humble, is executed as a criminal, leaves not the scratch of a pen as to any thing he taught even in that short

time and in that humble way; and lo! he turns out to be the founder of a kingdom which has followed to the grave multitudes of other kingdoms, and which still lives and expands with unabated strength and increasing power nineteen hundred years after he was buried.

Did he come into the world to play the part of an impostor, to live a conscious fraud and die on the cross with a falsehood on his lips? All humanity that has in it an atom of justice or fairness shudders at the horrible suggestion. So unselfish was his life, so free from all taint or touch of human ambition, so pure in its faultless and stainless morality, so grand and ennobling the principles practiced and inculcated, that even the ablest and most polished pens that have been employed to deny the truth of the material miracles ascribed

to him have not only refused to advance or defend any theory that impugned his honor and integrity, but, as has been seen, have on the contrary borne willing testimony to his pure and exalted character. He claimed to be the Son of God and the Son of man. Go through his whole life from Bethlehem to Calvary with a lighted candle, and point out where or when he ever uttered a word or performed an act beneath the demands or the dignity of the sublime dual character which he claimed the right to wear. Search all the annals of recorded time, and upon the theater of human action call the name of another who could have come and gone and played two such parts in perfect harmony with the high requirements of such exalted roles.

Discard as utterly false or delusive

the claims set forth in the sacred record in his behalf. Set down to the account of imposture or delusion in him and his followers every assumption of supernatural power on his part or theirs. Deny that there is any God, or if there be, cut off all connection between Christ and God, or assume that there never was any such connection. Strip him of all miraculous gifts and supernatural power and let him stand before the world as simply a man and nothing more. Behold the man! Behold his life! Behold his death! Behold the mighty influence he has exerted upon the world! Measure him alone by human standards, concede to him only human instrumentalities, and from this stand-point account for the admitted results. Has it ever been done? Can it be done? Must not all fair and just men, after making

the effort to solve the problem, exclaim as Napoleon did: "All this is to me a prodigy, an unfathomable mystery. . . . It is in vain that I reflect—all remains unaccountable. I defy you to cite another life like that of Christ."

The heaviest guns of the champions of unbelief have been trained on the material miracles ascribed to him in the Gospels. Theory after theory has been advanced and abandoned as insufficient. First came the rationalistic hypothesis, which granted that the incidents recorded in the Gospels were true, but claimed that they could be explained and accounted for on natural grounds. As a sample of the method of disposing of a miracle on this theory, Paulus, its most distinguished exponent, gives this explanation of the wine at the marriage-feast in Galilee. He says the

family was a very poor one in which the marriage took place, and that Jesus and his friends, knowing they were too poor to furnish the wine for the occasion, provided it and had it sent there without the knowledge of the family, not wishing to wound their feelings, and at some time during the feast produced it in the manner mentioned in the gospel account. Of course any fact can be turned in any desired direction, if arbitrary interpolations are allowed. Such a system of exposition and criticism as this was doomed to failure.

Then came Strauss with his *mythical theory*, which claimed that the alleged facts of the gospel possessed no historical value whatever; but were simply traditions, fables, myths, caught up or invented to teach or inculcate certain ideas or doctrines which those who used

or invented them wished to promulgate. The author of the theory attached no historic value to the gospel narratives. The book containing this theory was received all along the line of unbelief with a shout of welcome, and was regarded by the thousands who embraced it as the finishing stroke to the New Testament Scriptures, as a reliable record of what they proposed to chronicle. But in less than a generation this theory was generally abandoned, and even its author no longer stood by it as tenable, and the myth theory, which had dug the grave of the rationalistic theory, went to keep company with it in the tomb.

The brilliant and accomplished Frenchman, Renan, had become a convert to the theory of Strauss as set forth in the first "Life of Jesus" by the latter. Renan himself concluded

to write the life of Jesus, but before doing so resolved to visit the Holy Land, where the scenes recorded in the Gospels are laid. He says he found in the soil and topography and appearance of Palestine such an exact and detailed correspondence with the scenes recorded in the Gospels that the face of the country amounted in effect to a fifth Gospel. As he traveled over Palestine and examined the country he became convinced that in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John he had to meet history, not myths. Renan, by his "Life of Jesus," seems to have converted Strauss from his myth theory, or at least to have so shaken his faith in his favorite and once popular hypothesis that in his new and second "Life of Jesus" Strauss greatly modifies the position taken by him in his first "Life

of Jesus." The myth theory of Strauss became unable to stand before undenied and undeniable *facts.* In what has been denominated the *legendary theory*, put forth by Renan, the effort is made to discredit the material miracles as containing any thing supernatural in them, and at the same time to preserve the upright intentions and moral character of Jesus. Says Renan: "It is impossible among the miraculous stories, the wearisome enumeration of which the Gospels contain, to distinguish the miracles which have been attributed to Jesus by popular opinion from *those* in which he consented to take an active part." He adds: "In *most cases* the people themselves, from the undeniable need which they feel of seeing in great men and great events something divine, *create the marvelous legends afterward.*" And he

proceeds: "Who knows whether the celebrity of Christ as an exorcist did not spread about without his knowing it? Persons who reside in the East are sometimes surprised to find themselves, after a little time, possessed of great renown as physicians, sorcerers, or discoverers of treasure without being able to discover any satisfactory account of the facts which have given rise to these strange imaginings."

No such theory as this can be maintained. There are too many instances recorded in those portions of the Gospels which Renan does not deny to be authentic, where *Jesus himself* professed to work miracles, to accept any such solution of the difficulty as is given above. Looking over the whole ground covered by the Gospels, and noting the instances in which Jesus, with his own lips and

by his own actions claimed the power to raise the dead, feed the multitude and other miracles, the conclusion is unavoidable that he either possessed the supernatural power which he again and again claimed to possess, or he was, in the language of Strauss, "an audacious cheat and impostor." Opposite the name of Jesus of Nazareth Renan will not write those painful words. Yet his theory leads to that inevitable conclusion, and must in its turn join the funeral procession of other dead and abandoned theories that have been formulated and put forth to crush the supernatural power claimed for Jesus in the sacred record. But, the question of material miracles aside, how are the mighty influences which Christ has exerted upon the moral and spiritual nature of man and the civilization of the

world to be accounted for? That he brought into and left in the world a power that revolutionizes and transforms the whole nature of man, candor must and does admit. Under the influence of this power the proud become humble, the persecutor becomes tolerant; he who hated becomes charitable, the timid become brave, the lowly and the unknown become great and powerful, and under the mighty influence which his religion infuses into the human heart men of the humblest origin have shaken kings on their thrones and produced deeper and wider effects upon men and nations than the profoundest statecraft or the greatest military prowess. In the language of Lecky, already quoted, in speaking of the achievements of Jesus: "*Its simple record of three short years of active life has done*

more to regenerate and to soften mankind than all the disquisitions of the philosophers, and all the exhortations of moralists." This is a wonderful statement, coming as it does from one who can not be called a partial or prejudiced friend. But every word of it is strictly and literally true.

As before suggested, the great battles of unbelief have been fought against the supernatural power implied in the material miracles of the Gospels. Into that struggle, already glanced at, it is not proposed here and now to enter. The question is not whether Jesus exercised such an influence on water as to change it into wine, but has he produced upon the sinful human heart and the faculties of the human soul a transformation as great as or greater than the change of the water when it became wine?

In the case of the palsied man a spiritual and a material miracle were brought face to face. Jesus first said to the man with the palsy: "Son, be of good cheer: thy sins are forgiven." There could not have been a higher claim to supernatural power than is contained in this address; so much so, indeed, that it seemed to the scribes blasphemy. His reply to this is worthy of our most serious consideration: "Whether is easier, to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins are forgiven; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (he saith to the sick of the palsy), I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thy house." As though he had said: "You deny my power to work a spiritual miracle, to so operate upon the

human heart as to cleanse it from impurity and infuse into it a new life. I wish to know of you which you think the greater exercise of supernatural power, to renew and purify the heart or to cure the body of disease. Both demand the employment of supernatural power; both are miracles. One you can not perceive by the senses, the other you can. Therefore, to show you that I can perform the miracle of cleansing the heart and imparting new life to the soul, I say to this palsied man, Arise and walk." He performs the material miracle to put beyond cavil or dispute his power to work the spiritual miracle. The question may be well repeated: Which is the greater miracle, to cleanse the sinful heart and make a new man out of its possessor, or to cause the dead and withered limbs of the body to live

again? "But," says science, "we deny that it is possible to reanimate the dead limbs of the withered body; this would be a material miracle, contrary to the laws of nature and scientific truth, and must therefore be false." But what of this spiritual miracle? what of the reanimation and purification of the soul dead in trespasses and in sins? Is it not as much contrary to the laws of human nature for the soul dead to all good impulses to be made alive to the holiest and most ennobling influences and aspirations as it is for the body dead from disease to again take on the life and energy of perfect health? But the reply is made: When you talk of spiritual miracles, when you speak of causing the man morally and spiritually blind to see with a clear eye the good and right way, and of inclining and em-

powering him to walk therein, you enter a realm with which science has nothing to do. But it is a realm with which *man*, with his longing after immortality, with his restless soul and hungry heart, beset with the ills of life that all flesh is heir to, has much to do. Can you, O scientist, whatever the strength of your intellect and the range of your attainments, stand over the grave of a wife or child and refuse to weep because science has nothing to do with tears? Can you experience without a pang of regret the desertion or treachery of a friend upon whom you have conferred benefits because science takes no cognizance of ingratitude? Can you behold your earthly possessions swept away and step from affluence to poverty without a sigh because science makes no note of adversity?

Has science placed you so high in the scale of being that the hand of bereavement and the shafts of misfortune can not reach you? Can you, endowed as you are with the instincts of humanity, and subject to the failings and frailties and sufferings which attach and come to all in a greater or less degree, afford to draw closely around you the mantle of intellectual pride and promenade the mountain-ranges of human thought, saying: "I have nothing to do with the struggles and sufferings and hopes and aspirations of the human family in the valley below the heights on which I stand. Science ignores all the misfortunes of life, ignores a future state and all these things; I, as a scientist, likewise ignore them?" You may affect to ignore all these things, but will all these things ignore you? What will become of the

scientist when God comes to deal with the man, when he is called upon to answer for his persistent refusal to give Christianity a fair trial on the terms it proposes? Surely the testimony of those who have given the religion of Christ this trial—the sublime character and wonderful life and achievements of its Author, the patent effects which it has produced upon the lives of men and the current of human history—entitles it to the gravest and most serious consideration at the hands of all men of reflection. Every material miracle recorded in the Gospels might be dissolved in the alembic of scientific research, and the marvelous life and character and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth and their effect upon the world would still stand the unshaken and unsolved miracle of human history.

John Randolph, of Roanoke, said: "The only men I ever knew well, ever approached closely, whom I did not discover to be unhappy are sincere believers of the gospel, and conform their lives, as far as the nature of man can permit, to its precepts. There are only *three* of them. And yet ambition and avarice and pleasure, as it is called, have their temples crowded with votaries, whose own experience has proved to them the insufficiency and emptiness of their pursuits, and who obstinately turn away from the only waters that can slake their dying thirst and heal their diseases." If there ever was a man whose life, associations, reading, and temperament would disincline him at every point to the Christian religion, Mr. Randolph was that man. But at last he was led to listen to its voice and

accept its terms and experience its wonderful transforming power upon his heart. Hear him after tasting its waters and experiencing its effects. In writing to an intimate friend in reference to the great change that the religion of Christ had produced in him he uses this, for him strange, language: "Congratulate me, dear Frank; wish me joy you need not; give it you can not. I am at last reconciled to my God, and have assurance of his pardon through faith in Christ, against which the very gates of hell can not prevail. Fear hath been driven out by perfect love. I *now know* that *you know* how I feel; and within a month, for the first time, I understand your feelings and character, and that of every *real* Christian." To another valued and intimate friend, who it seems had attributed this wonderful

change in Mr. Randolph to a delusive imagination, he thus writes: "I can not, however, express sorrow, for I do not feel it, at the impression which you tell me my last letter made upon you. May it lead to the same happy consequences that I have experienced, which I now feel, in that sunshine of the heart which the peace of God that passeth all understanding alone can bestow. Your imputing such sentiments to a heated imagination does not surprise me, who have been bred in the school of Hobbes and Boyle, and Shaftesbury and Bolingbroke, and Hume and Voltaire and Gibbon, who have cultivated the skeptical philosophy from my vainglorious boyhood—I might almost say childhood — and who have felt all that unutterable disgust which hypocrisy and cant and fanaticism never

fail to excite in men of education and refinement, superadded to our natural repugnance to Christianity. I am not even now insensible to this impression, but as the excesses of her friends (real or pretended) can never alienate the votary of liberty from a free form of government and enlist him under the banners of despotism, so neither can the cant of fanaticism or hypocrisy or of both . . . disgust the pious with true religion."

These are strange utterances from a man of John Randolph's antecedents. No one will charge him with being a weak and willing witness to the truth of Christianity, or doubt the entire sincerity of the man when he gives his testimony as to what Christianity had done for him and in him, after he gained his own consent to accept the heavenly

visitant upon her own terms and to put her claims to the proffered test. And yet his is but cumulative of the testimony of millions from Pentecost to the present time, all speaking the same language, testifying to the same facts, and harmoniously proclaiming the same results. This universal agreement of all Christians of all nations, in all ages, to the fact that Christianity does give rest to the soul; does satisfy the "hunger of the heart," diffusing through it that peace that passeth all understanding, is a mighty and wonderful fact established by a character and concurrence of evidence which no fair man ought to allow himself to doubt, and no accountable human being, whatever his intellect or attainments, to disregard without a serious and honest examination. This similarity of experience and testimony did not

escape the acute and powerful mind of Randolph, and he thus refers to it: "It ought never to be forgotten that real converts to Christianity on opposite sides of the globe agree at the same moment to the same facts. Thus Dr. Hoge and Mr. Key, although strangers, understand perfectly what each other feels and believes." He thus illustrates the force of this wonderful fact: "If I were to show a MS. in some unknown tongue to half a dozen persons, all strangers to each other and natives of different countries, and they should all give me the same translation, could I doubt their acquaintance with the strange language?" Pursuing the same line of thought in describing to his friend the great change that had been wrought in him, he proceeds: "I now read with relish and understand St.

Paul's Epistles, which not long since I could not comprehend, even with the help of Mr. Locke's paraphrase. Taking up a few days ago at an ordinary, the 'Life of John Bunyan,' which I had never read before, I find an exact coincidence in our feelings and opinions on this head as well as others." Speaking of the Psalms of David, Mr. Randolph says: "Once, of all the books of Holy Writ, they were my especial aversion; but, thanks be to God! they have long constituted a favorite portion of that treasure of wisdom."

Here are two extraordinary statements from a witness whose intelligence and sincerity will not be questioned. He now reads with relish and comprehends the Epistles of Paul, which but a short while before he could not comprehend with all the expository help he

could bring to his assistance. The Psalms of David, once his especial aversion, had now become a favorite portion of the Scriptures. How are these statements to be explained? Why does he now fully understand what was before incomprehensible, and now delight in what he formerly so much disliked? What poured new light upon the Epistles of Paul and added unwonted charms to the Psalms of David? All along the line of Christian history millions have given testimony precisely similar to this of Mr. Randolph. Why is such coincident and concurrent and multitudinous evidence thrown aside without a thought or an effort to explain or account for the phenomenon? What is the true explanation of the radical change in the moral and spiritual and mental characteristics of those who in

truth and sincerity accept and embrace the offers of salvation through Christ? Have they not received just what he promised to give all his true and humble followers? "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

Do not these passages, from the pen of inspiration, explain the new, strange light that illuminated the Epistles of Paul and made the formerly distasteful Psalms of David so dear to the *converted* and *regenerated* man? Has any other solution been given, can any other solution be given of the strange and won-

derful facts which have marked the experience and history in all ages of those who have accepted the terms and received the spirit of religion which has been given to the world through Jesus Christ?

If the leaders of unbelief are determined to ignore such facts and to persist in refusing to give Christianity a fair and impartial trial upon its own terms and its own merits, why have they sought, why do they seek by learned treatises and ingeniously-constructed theories, to undermine and destroy a religion which is "the last restraint of the powerful and the last hope of the wretched?" If *they* will not come unto God that they may have life, for whose benefit and to accomplish what public or private good do they seek to prevent others from doing so?

Cui bono? could be stamped on all the infidel books that have ever been written, and their authors would stand silent in the presence of the momentous question. Who can tell how many infidel authors have written to answer questions by their own hearts propounded relative to the great hereafter, and finding no answer save in the word of God, which condemns sins they are unwilling to abandon and requires a humility against which their intellectual pride rebels, determine to discredit the whole revelation?

But let us return to the tomb in which the dead body of the humble carpenter's son was laid, and from that as a starting-point endeavor to trace—however imperfectly it may be done—the rise and progress of his religion as illustrated and developed in the lives and labors of

his two chief apostles, who as the pioneers of Christianity went to the front to cut a way for the gospel through Jewish and Gentile hate and persecution and idolatry—Peter, the apostle of the Jews, and Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles.

II.

Peter.

We have followed this wonderful man, Jesus of Nazareth, to his grave. Jerusalem demanded his life; Rome signed his death-warrant; and, as if to strip him of all earthly influence or sympathy with any human being, Peter, his trusted follower and friend, in that hour of utter destitution denied and disowned him. No human voice fell, in protest against his crucifixion, upon his dying ear. Judged from a human standpoint, if there ever was a dead man and a lost cause, Jesus was that man and his religion that cause as he lay in his rock-bound and guarded tomb. That his disciples regarded his mission as ended with his death is evident from

all that transpired. They had loved him and followed him, and he had left with them the memory of a good name and a blameless life, and they sincerely mourned his fate and his loss; but all that they expected or hoped would come to them from him vanished with his death. True he had said to them upon more than one occasion during the course of his teaching that he would be slain and would rise again, yet it is certain from their whole conduct that they never appreciated or understood a statement so foreign to all their preconceived opinions and their experience. They shared in common with their people the notion and expectation of a political Messiah who was to restore Israel. That Peter, when he saw Jesus arrested, in the hands of his enemies, and approaching certain death, regarded his cause

as lost and his mission on this earth at an end is evident from his whole conduct. His sincere devotion to the Master can not be doubted. When he drew his sword in the garden and smote off the ear of the servant of the high-priest, he gave the highest evidence that one man can give to another of true attachment—a willingness to risk his life in his defense. For this display of loyalty and courage he had been rebuked by his Master, who meekly and without resistance submitted to the arrest. With the lights then before him what was Peter to do? His denial of the Master has been regarded as the act of one who, having been born again, having passed from a state of nature to a state of grace, forfeits or compromises his Christian character and integrity under the impulse of a sudden fear or a

powerful temptation; and his example has been held up as a warning to the Christian of the great danger of yielding to temptation and untoward surroundings and making shipwreck of his faith. Is this view of the subject sustained by the record?

In his ever-memorable farewell address to his disciples, Jesus had endeavored to explain to them and make them sensible of the true nature of his kingdom and what was about to transpire in regard to himself, to them, and to the great cause in which he was to lay down his life. But the dimness of their apprehension and comprehension of what he said is most manifest by their whole conduct, during the time he was talking to them and afterward. The promised Comforter had not yet come. That Comforter, with his strengthening

and illuminating power, had not yet entered their hearts and minds, but the assurance and the promise were given that when the Comforter did come to take up his abode with them what then seemed so dark and hopeless should become plain to them, and the kingdom of grace, the kingdom of heaven, of which they had heard so much and understood so little, should be set up in their hearts. Said the Saviour to them: "These things have I spoken unto you, while yet abiding with you. But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, *he shall teach you all these things and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you.*" As if he had said: "I know many things that I am now saying to you seem strange and are not comprehended by you. The time has not yet come for

you to fully appreciate and understand them in all their bearings. It is now dark, and you can not see your way, but the day-break is just ahead of you—when the Comforter comes with his illuminating and strengthening power he will make all that I am now saying to you perfectly plain. You will then remember these things that I am now saying to you, but how different every thing will then appear to you. Every word that I am now saying shall then glow with a light and expand with a meaning that you do not even dream of now. Be patient; the curtain will soon be raised, and a new, bright world will break upon your enraptured sight." Observing their sorrow at the thought of separation from him, he says: "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not

come unto you." And again: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but *ye can not bear them now.* Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he *shall guide you into all truth.*"

Is it not a mistaken view of Peter's denial to assume that he had at that time the grace and light that were promised farther on? Can his, in any correct sense, be properly denominated a case of "falling from grace," as that term is generally used and understood? Can his conduct under the circumstances by which he was surrounded and with his spiritual condition at the time be likened in any just sense to that of the Christian, who, having passed from death unto life and received the spirit of adoption, relapses into sin, backslides, or makes shipwreck of the faith? It is respectfully

submitted that if at that time Peter had received the promised Comforter, Christ formed in the heart the hope of glory, not all the powers of hell or Rome or Jerusalem could have forced such a denial from his lips. As he then saw and viewed the situation it must have appeared to him in this wise: "I have thrown aside my nets, given up my calling, humble though it was, and followed the Master whom I sincerely loved and who I believed and now believe loved me. I have never doubted his truth or fidelity. I was willing to fight for him, to die for him if need be, to save him. But he forbade me to defend him, and would not defend himself. The rulers now have him in their unrelenting grasp, and I know what the end will be. His doom is sealed. What am I to do? Shall I throw my life

away recklessly and to no purpose? I expected him to restore Israel, but that is all over now; that has vanished like a dream. God knows I would gladly lay down my life to save him. I offered to do it; I could, I can give no higher evidence of my love for him and my loyalty to him. My life, though obscure and worth but little to others, is something to my humble family. I may yet save it, and I feel that I should not throw it needlessly away." Such a view of the situation throws no discredit upon human nature even in its noblest and manliest aspects. From the standpoint of the natural man Peter viewed the situation, and could view it from no other at that time. When he saw the ship dipping water and sinking to the bottom, who shall blame him if he made an effort to swim ashore?

To hold that Peter, at the time of the denial, had a full and comprehensive understanding of Jesus and the character and object of his mission on earth, that he had experienced the great work which the religion of Christ proposes to do in the human heart—in a word, that he was a converted man—is, it is with deference to all contrary opinions submitted, not only unsustained by the record, but greatly weakens and strongly tends to destroy the admitted and amazing contrast between his conduct then and his grand, heroic, and immortal course very soon thereafter. On the night of the denial he was *an unarmed man;* on the Day of Pentecost he was a soldier of the cross, having put on the whole armor of God.

Jesus fully recognized the fact that his disciples did not understand many

of the things that he said to them, nor was it expected or intended that they should at the time have this full and perfect comprehension. "These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs [or parables]; the hour cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but shall *tell you plainly* of the Father." After listening further to him the disciples, supposing they understood him fully, exclaim: "So, now speakest thou plainly and speakest no proverb. Now know we that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest from God." The Master knew perfectly that they were far, very far, from the full comprehension which they supposed themselves to have, and immediately replied: "Do you now believe? Behold the hour

cometh, yea, is come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and *shall leave me alone.*" That hour did soon come, and he was left alone—all alone—and his scattered disciples went their respective ways, and he went to his solitary place of abode, the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, wherein nobody had been buried before. No word of sympathy cheered him on the cross, and the bones of no fellow-mortal gave even the companionship of the grave to his mangled body.

Let us pause here and take a calm survey of the real situation. Viewed from a human stand-point, did ever men look out upon a darker or more hopeless field than that which lay before these unhappy disciples? Their great leader, upon whose arm they had leaned in every emergency, whose footsteps they

had followed and whose fortunes they had shared, had perished at the hands of his enemies. Dispirited, intimidated, demoralized, hopeless, they were only too glad to be allowed the poor privilege of creeping back to their humble homes alive. So far as *man* could see or expect or calculate or hope, the situation was desperate. If the cause he came to establish did not sleep in the grave where his body was laid, where or with whom had it sought refuge? That it was as dead as its dead leader nobody doubted or could doubt. The resurrection of the one seemed as probable as that of the other. The idea that Peter and his humble, ignorant Galilean coadjutors could suppose themselves able in the face of Roman authority and Jewish persecution to take up and carry on to success what their trusted leader

had lost his life in the vain effort to accomplish, is too incredible for serious consideration. How could they hope to live on a field where he had fallen, or to triumph where he had failed? That they looked for any further help from him whose body lay in the tomb is negatived by every fact stated in the record. They were not expecting his resurrection. When early in the morning the women returned from the tomb and reported his body gone, the announcement was received with astonishment and incredulity. And when Peter and others of the disciples went to the sepulcher and found that in fact his body was not there, they were greatly astonished, and knew not what to make of it, and went away in utter bewilderment. "For," says the sacred record, "*as yet they knew not the scripture, that he*

must rise again from the dead. So the disciples went away again unto their own home." What else could they do or be expected to do in view of the situation? To suppose that they would or could conceive themselves capable of going about preaching what he had preached, teaching what he had taught, without meeting the fate he had met, is to deny them the possession of ordinary common sense and sagacity. They believed themselves as capable of raising his body from the grave as of taking up and carrying on to success the cause in which he had failed and perished.

But there came a time when their sorrow gave way to joy, their despair to hope, their timidity to courage, their perplexing fears and bewildered aims to a settled purpose and a lofty faith and a dauntless enthusiasm that shook the

very foundation of the temple and spread dismay through the councils of the rabbis and rulers of Jerusalem. Who blew the trumpet of resurrection above the grave of their lost cause, and bade it come forth and begin its grand triumphal march through the ages? It was a wonderful thing. What brought it about? The Gospels record, in brief, that Jesus arose from the dead, appeared to his disciples, conversed with them often, and instructed them to tarry at Jerusalem until they were indued with power from on high. They claim to have met him frequently after his resurrection, to have seen the prints of the nails that confined his hands to the cross, and the wound in his side made by the spear of the soldier. We are told that he showed himself to them by many proofs, appearing to them

frequently for the space of forty days; that before he disappeared from the Mount of Olives and ascended to his Father he promised them that they should receive power when the Holy Ghost should come upon them, and that they should be witnesses for him both in Jerusalem and Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth; that he directed them to go into all the world and preach his gospel to every creature, and that he would be with them always to the end of the world.

They do not pretend to have evolved from their own consciousness or to have drawn from their own resources the power and the inspiration, the courage and the ability that enabled them, with such grand results and mighty effect, to preach the gospel of the Son of God in sight of the cross on

which he died, the tomb in which he was buried, and before the faces of the very men who had accomplished his death. O no, they make no such claim as that; and if they had made any such pretension, would it not be as great a draft on human credulity to believe it as is required to believe the story of the resurrection and the baptism of the Holy Ghost? One of two things must be assumed in reference to the account they have given of the resurrection: they either invented a conscious falsehood or have told the truth about it. They knew Jesus too well to cover their statement with the charitable suggestion that they were mistaken. All the features of his face, the expression of his eye, the intonations of his voice—in short, all the marks of recognition by which one man is able to know another—

were familiar to them. They had been intimately associated with him for three years; had been with him night and day during his whole ministry under a variety of circumstances, and on terms of the closest confidence and most unrestrained personal intercourse. They claim for the space of forty days to have seen him, talked with him, not only as to future events, but also as to the past transactions that occurred in his presence and theirs, and with which both he and they were perfectly familiar. To assume that under such circumstances they might have been mistaken as to his personal identity is wholly inadmissible. It would have been impossible for another to impose himself on them as Jesus — as impossible as for some pretender to have imposed himself on the Old Guard as Napoleon. They saw

him and conversed with him and associated with him after he died and was buried, or they have left on record a deliberate falsehood. Of course, if they came to the conclusion to run a scheme on the line of falsehood and imposture, they must have relied alone on their own sharpness and cunning to impose it upon the world and rally recruits to their standard. They expected and could expect no divine assistance; for, being Jews, they could not hope that their God would become an ally or a party to a plan of deception and a system of fraud. Taking into view their humble origin and position, without wealth, without influential and powerful friends, on what ground could they base any reasonable hope of success? It must be allowed, unless we set them down as idiots, that they expected to succeed in

the enterprise. The rulers of the temple, the rabbis and priests, they knew perfectly well would resist, with all their power, the acceptance by the people of any story that put Jesus forth as the Messiah, and would thus fasten on themselves the guilt and odium of having imbrued their hands in his blood. Their falsehood could not fail to provoke the instantaneous denial of these ecclesiastical potentates, and draw upon the heads of its inventors and propagators all the persecution that Jewish hate and influence could bring to bear against them. And if, in view of these obvious and powerful considerations, they were still determined to persevere in their efforts to set up the fraud, it seems little less than madness to have inaugurated their campaign at Jerusalem, where all the evidence, positive and circumstan-

tial, was of such easy access as to make exposure certain. Would not the plainest dictates of prudence and common sense have suggested to these plotters and schemers that the secluded and retired region of Galilee, away from the vigilance and vengeance of the Jewish rulers, and where Jesus had done most of his wonderful works, was far better suited to their purpose? There they would have been far safer from the espionage and malice of the hierarchy. Christ had sought that sequestered section, removed from the turbulence and passions of a great city, where the kingdom he proposed to set up could grow without disturbance or molestation. Undisturbed and comparatively free from personal danger, they might have proclaimed their falsehood of the resurrection amid the distant vales and mount-

ains of Galilee to a people who had heard Christ gladly during his ministry, and would therefore be more favorably inclined to lend a willing ear to the story of his resurrection. But Jerusalem! How could they expect their story to make headway there, or how hope to escape the power that had laid its iron hand upon Jesus and nailed him to the cross?

Whatever became of the body of Jesus after it was laid in the tomb, it must be accepted as a fact that in some way, through some agency, for some purpose, it was removed from the place of sepulture. If, as it is stated in the record, a guard of Roman soldiers was placed at the tomb to prevent the removal of the body, it is difficult to believe that it could have been stolen by the disciples. Of course no such thing could have taken

place without entailing upon the guard consequences that they would have been very unwilling to encounter. But the body was removed; how or by whom we know not, save from the account given in the sacred record. However unworthy of belief Peter and his co-laborers may be regarded, they certainly would not have been guilty of the folly of proclaiming the resurrection in the streets of Jerusalem, where their enemies could, in a few minutes, have gone to the tomb, produced the body, and refuted the falsehood on the spot. The fact that the resurrection was publicly announced by Peter in the hearing of the men who had been instrumental in the death of Jesus, must establish beyond cavil or controversy that the tomb was empty. Their claim of a resurrection was made public on the spot where

the tragedy was enacted, and in the immediate vicinity of the empty grave. They did not change the venue on the Jews, but challenged them to any refutation they had to make where all the evidence that existed in the premises was of easy access. The Jews never produced the body or claimed that it had not disappeared from the tomb.

Coming fresh from the Mount of Olives, from whose summit they claimed that the risen Saviour had ascended to heaven, the eleven, with others of the disciples, assembled in their place of abode and engaged in earnest and continuous prayer. They soon took steps to fill the place in the ranks of the twelve made vacant by the defection of Judas, and prepared deliberately to inaugurate the preaching of the gospel and to set in motion the greatest revolution that

has ever swayed the destinies of men and of nations. Can it be received as true that these twelve humble Galileans and unknown peasants, stirred by no impulse and sustained by no inspiration save what is common to man in his natural state, were capable of such a conception and such an achievement?

As before suggested, they make no such claim. They ascribe all that was done to the influence and inspiration of the Comforter which Christ promised to send them after he went back to the Father. They tell us of the wonderful display of divine power when the promised baptism of fire came upon them on the Day of Pentecost and of the miraculous gift of tongues. While they were praying *something* occurred that attracted the populace of the city to the place where they were assembled. There

must have been some unusual manifestations of some sort that drew the crowd to them. The account given says that a sound resembling the roar of a tempest was heard, and forked tongues of fire sat upon each one, and they began to speak in languages in which they had not been educated. At that time it seems that there were in Jerusalem devout men representing many different nations, and of course speaking as many different languages, and these gathered about the place where the strange demonstrations were being made. They were greatly astonished at hearing those ignorant peasants speaking in all the various languages represented in the vast multitude that had been attracted to the spot. Very naturally they asked of each other the question: "What does all this mean? How do

you account for this?" So far as the record informs us there was but one solution offered of the strange manifestations that all stood and witnessed with amazement. The friends of Jesus were certainly doing something out of the usual order of things which those who witnessed the spectacle were at a loss to account for. The only suggestion made by any one was that these men were drunk on new wine. This came to the ears of Peter and the others. Standing up together and facing the multitude, with Peter at their head, they inaugurated a conflict and sounded the first notes of a battle that has been shaking this earth from center to circumference ever since. That memorable day was to witness the first gospel sermon ever preached under the great commission. The first sentence con-

tained a denial and refutation of an unfounded slander upon them and the cause to which they were about to devote their lives—their all. It came from the same source that had borne false testimony before Pilate and forced him to sign the death-warrant of Jesus. And Peter's remarks were especially addressed to them: "Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: for these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." He then proceeds to quote the prophet and to show that what they were witnessing, so far from being the senseless ravings of drunken men, was the beginning of a new era long ago foreshadowed in the solemn language of prophecy.

And still addressing the Jews, he proceeded to speak directly of Jesus of Nazareth. He declared him to be one approved by God unto them by mighty works and signs and wonders. He referred to them as witnesses of the mighty and miraculous works of Jesus. That Christ had performed these wonders Peter did not avouch on his own authority alone, but said in substance to the Jews who were listening to him: "*You* know he performed these wonders; you saw him, you heard him. The mighty works of which I now speak were performed before your eyes as well as ours, and you can not and will not deny what I say of him."

So far as we are advised no voice rose from the multitude in denial. He then proceeded, without softening his language, to charge them with the murder of

the man who performed these wonderful works in their presence, and to boldly and solemnly affirm that he whom they had cruelly, unjustly, and illegally slain had broken the bands of death, wrested from the grave its temporary victory, and ascended to the right hand of the Father, there to rule and reign forever. These were startling and dangerous words to be uttered by such a man in such a presence. Is this the same man who but a short while ago, when he saw his leader in the hands of his enemies and on his way to certain death, disclaimed and repudiated all connection or association with him, and denied that he even knew him? Looking at the facts from a human stand-point only, will some one suggest an explanation (which he will recommend a reasonable man to accept) of the difference between

the Peter who stood in the court of the high-priest and, trembling with fear, denied all knowledge of and sympathy with Jesus, and the Peter who stood on the Day of Pentecost and facing the crowd that had mocked and jeered on Calvary amid the dying agonies of their victim, proclaimed him to be the Son of God, and charged them as the murderers who had shed his innocent blood? Between the night of the denial in the court of the high-priest and the Day of Pentecost, what had occurred? Between these two points of time he had seen his leader, without resistance, put to a shameful and ignominious death, his body laid in the grave, and his sorrowing disciples repair in fear and despair to their humble homes. Is there any thing in all this to impart to this humble Galilean the sublime courage and resistless

eloquence that swept every thing before him on that memorable day? Did a handful of humble, helpless men ever draw courage and confidence, the sublimest which this world has ever witnessed, from such a situation before? Is it conceivable that of their own volition and motion they would get together under such circumstances, concoct a story about the resurrection which, being false, they could expect no one to believe, and proclaim the falsehood in the very teeth of men who had had power and influence enough with Rome to secure the death of Jesus? What could they expect but severe punishment—perhaps death—at the hands of the men who had murdered Jesus by denouncing them openly as murderers in the presence of assembled thousands? Looked at on every side, and through

and through, what profit, what benefit did they or could they possibly hope to derive from the promulgation of a manufactured story of the resurrection? If such a falsehood to all human appearances could bring nothing but persecution or death upon the inventors, will some one furnish the reason or the motive that led them to make the investment in the scheme of deception and fraud? Good men may face death to embrace the truth, but a lie can boast of no such loyalty; it has no such power of attraction. Peter and his associates were humble, unlearned men, possessing within themselves nothing attractive or inspiring to commend them, or any enterprise in which they might engage, to the attention or favorable consideration of their fellow-men; and giving them credit for sound minds and ordinary

common sense, or at least conceding to them the instinct of self-preservation, which the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air possess, how are we to account for their conceiving a lie about the resurrection and deliberately concluding to risk every thing upon it, and, as if to court death, pressing the falsehood under the very noses of the men who had murdered their Master?

Peter seems not to have been interrupted at all by any of his audience during the delivery of his discourse. Is it probable that he would have been allowed to proceed unchallenged if the whole story he was telling was a miserable and monstrous falsehood? When he appealed to the Jews in his audience as witnesses to establish the truth of what he said about the life and labors of Christ, if there had been no founda-

tion in fact for what he stated, would they, thus appealed to, have stood without a protest, and thus by their silence have given tacit sanction to what he said? When we give due weight to the fact that the audience to whom the discourse of Peter was addressed contained a number of persons to whom many of the facts on which he touched were familiar, the effect produced by his sermon comes in as a powerful re-enforcement to the truth of his statements. Instead of being hooted from the place where he stood as a miserable cheat and a fraud, we are told that the impression made on his hearers was profound and overwhelming. If there had been no truth in what he said about the life and works of Jesus, nothing phenomenal in the surroundings of the speaker, no visible manifestation of a strange power

or influence that threw their spell upon the minds of his listeners, nothing to aid his natural powers in presenting an insincere and fraudulent story altogether improbable in itself — ay, impossible from a human stand-point — told by an obscure, unknown man with such powers of persuasion and eloquence as one in his rank and condition might be supposed to possess, with no prestige or standing to give weight to his words or lend persuasion to his tongue; instead of three thousand of his hearers being convinced and added to the disciples of Christ, Peter would have been run out of Jerusalem as a crank, or stoned to death as an insolent impostor and contemptible charlatan. That such a man, with nothing to aid him but the recitation of a manufactured story which he and his ignorant accomplices had in-

vented, proclaimed in the presence of the enemies of Jesus familiar with the facts, and who had every interest and inclination to prevent any one from receiving it as true, could have produced such a sensation upon such an audience, passes all the bounds of belief.

That Peter was not drunk became very evident to all before he had proceeded far in his remarks. What particular conduct on the part of the disciples led to the suggestion that they were intoxicated of course is not known. It may have been their transports of rapture and rejoicing caused by the descent of the Holy Ghost upon them. Certain it is they were manifesting in an unusual manner the presence of some great influence that was stirring the very depths of their natures.

Who can contemplate the mental and

moral condition of Simon Peter, the humble fisherman, and that of Peter, the apostle of the Jews, and not feel that a new power had been in some way and from some source imparted to him? He claims to have received the strange and wonderful spiritual light which Jesus just before his death had promised his disciples. Is not his claim true? Can the wonderful change be accounted for in any other way? The same impulse, the same inspiration, whatever it might be, that lifted him from the position of a common fisherman to the elevation of moral grandeur on which he stood on the Day of Pentecost, sustained him and abided with him all the remainder of his life. Through the fiercest and most unrelenting persecution and the most fearful dangers he maintained the same firmness of purpose, the same

broadness of view, the same inspiration and illumination of the soul as when on that grand and memorable day he uttered the breathing thoughts and burning words that "pealed the first notes to sound the march" of Christianity to the conquest of the world. Fully armed and equipped for the glorious war, he never afterward faltered in the face of any danger or cowered in the presence of any foe. What he proclaimed on the Day of Pentecost he finally sealed with his blood.

Peter was very soon called upon to face the persecution which he knew was inevitable. Indeed, the Master before his death had told him and the rest what they might expect as his followers and disciples. In his farewell address to them, so full of tender affection and melting pathos, he had said: "Remem-

ber the word which I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." And again: "They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service."

According to the narrative in the Acts of the Apostles, one morning as Peter and John were going to the temple at the hour of prayer they saw a man who was a cripple from his birth, and who, it seems, was placed daily at the door that he might solicit alms of those who went in and out. This man, on seeing Peter and John, held out his hand to them for alms. Peter said to him: "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." And it is

said that he arose and walked and followed Peter and John into the temple, leaping with joy and praising God. This wonderful cure created a profound impression on the public mind. The man was about forty years old, and seems to have been widely known, as he had occupied a very public place to solicit alms, and had become a very familiar object to all who passed that way. So great, indeed, was the sensation created by this event that the rulers of the Jews determined, if possible, to counteract it. Peter and John were put in arrest and held until the following day, when they were brought before the rulers and elders and scribes for trial. It is said to be one of the highest achievements of the advocate to be able to embody in the mere statement of his case a conclusive and unan-

swerable argument in favor of its justice. The reply of Peter, when called upon by his judges to state what he had to say in the premises, is a striking illustration of the mere statement of a case being decisive of the whole matter. It must not only have silenced all controversy as to any culpability on his part, but to have covered his judges with confusion. "Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, *if we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man*, by what means he is made whole; be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole." This was bold, startling—ay, grand—language to come from an obscure fisherman in the presence of

the rulers of Israel, and must have almost taken their breath. It left not a shred to cover the nakedness of the pitiable and despicable business in which they were engaged—of trying men as criminals for performing an act of mercy to a poor, helpless cripple—and placed those high functionaries, in the eyes of all who witnessed the scene, in the most humiliating and contemptible attitude. It charged them boldly with having the blood of the Son of God upon their hands, and proclaimed in the hearing of all, without stint or equivocation, that he had risen from his soldier-guarded grave. It claimed, without evasion or hesitation, that it was through the power of their murdered but risen victim that the lame man then stood before them, cured of his life-long affliction and sound in limb. What age or

annals can furnish a sublimer moral spectacle than this scene of Peter before the Sanhedrim? Truth never appeared in more majestic mien than when in the person of a Galilean peasant she thus confronted, with unblanched cheek and unquailing eye, the assembled wisdom and power of Israel. Priest and scribe and rabbi must have felt keenly the embarrassment of their position. Those ecclesiastical potentates evidently expected, when they had Peter and John arrested, that they would tremble in their presence and quail before their authority. The paralyzing language that fell in burning words from the lips of Peter must have struck them dumb with amazement. The consternation, it may well be supposed, could not have been greater had a bomb been exploded right in the midst of their robes and phy-

lacteries. The humble prisoners were masters of the situation, and the high-priest and his coadjutors knew it and felt it. They saw too late their mistake in presuming on their authority and the prestige of their position to have these men arrested. The case was before them in the form of a public trial. The prisoners stood there in the presence of the crowd, and when called to account for what they had done, boldly proclaimed the facts of the case and defied their authority. The case was up, and must be disposed of in some way—either by condemning and punishing the accused or discharging them from arrest. The prisoners being removed to enable the court to consult and determine what was best to be done in the premises, some such consultation as this must have taken place: "What are we

to do about this matter? Everybody in Jerusalem knows about this lame man being restored to health and activity; that fact can not be gainsaid. The man and his decrepitude are familiar to all. We dare not have these prisoners stoned to death, as they ought to be for their insolence and audacity in charging us with murder, and in daring to claim in our august presence that they did this thing by the power of that crucified impostor and blasphemer. The people would never submit to have them killed for performing a cure upon a poor crippled creature. We'll do the next best thing in our power. We'll have them brought in, publicly reprimand them, threaten them, and release them." This was the sage conclusion to which they came, and was perhaps, under the circumstances, about the best they

could have done. Peter and John were accordingly brought back into court, and, being warned to speak no more to the people about Jesus, were discharged. This was the first trial of the followers of Jesus after the crucifixion—the one side represented by all the pomp and circumstance and authority of the ecclesiastical monopoly that claimed to be the sole depository of all the true religion there was in the world; the other by two humble, unlearned peasants, but clothed with an invisible power that caused the rock-ribbed temple of Judaism to tremble from turret to foundation-stone. It was a singular trial. No witnesses were introduced by the prosecution or defense. That the lame man had been healed seemed to have been assumed as a fact by both sides. Evidently with a view of overawing the two

humble followers of Christ, they put to them this question: "By what power or in what name have ye done this?" They got the answer; the trial was over; there was silence in that judgment-hall as the voice of Peter died away. The Sanhedrim was not accustomed to be talked to in that way, and that an humble fisherman should dare to so speak in their presence was an astounding revelation. Why does the great Sanhedrim pause? Why do not the high-priest and his associates put the heel of authority upon the two miserable worms that were before them, and crush them into the earth? There stood that good deed to the poor man pointing its accusing finger at them, and that good deed had gathered about the streets of Jerusalem a host of friends who believed in the crucified

Nazarene. The bold declarations of Peter, nervous with the power of eternal truth, the poor man that he had healed standing by his side, and the people rallying around the Christian hero as he stood in sublime defiance of earthly power and in humble faith in Jesus, alarmed and dismayed them. The conclusion to which the Sanhedrim came, to dismiss Peter and John unpunished and with an admonition to talk no more to the people about Jesus, was a *dernier ressort*, a make-shift to cover their defeat and confusion with a mere show of authority. But Peter, feeling the solid ground of eternal truth beneath his feet, determined that they should not cover their retreat even with this thin disguise. He might have retired from the presence of the Sanhedrim in silence, not saying any thing as to what his

future course would be. But the spirit that had borne him so bravely through the trial did not desert him at the moment of victory. In a few sublime words he gave them to understand that he owed an allegiance to God which they did not possess the power to force him to deny or forswear; that he had spoken nothing to the people about Jesus that he did not know to be true; and that what he had seen with his own eyes and heard with his own ears he intended to publish to the people, in disregard of all the threats and power that they might or could command to suppress it. Thus flinging defiance at their authority, and pouring contempt on their threats, he left their presence, the glow of his great victory flushing his cheek and the inspiration of his lofty purpose swelling his heart. Ar-

rested and brought as a prisoner before the high court of Jerusalem for doing a deed of mercy to a poor man in the name of his Master, he had met the men whose hands were red with the blood of Jesus, on their own chosen ground, driven them from the field, and delivered a parting shot as they retreated. Thus ended the first trial between the enemies of Christianity and the humble men, who, all alone in an unfriendly world, were seeking to advance the cause in which their leader had fallen.

The result of this trial in which these two humble men gained such a strange and signal victory over the assembled power and wisdom and learning of the temple was, as might well have been expected, to deepen and widen the influence of the apostles with the people.

They continued, as they announced to the Sanhedrim they would do, to preach, and multitudes flocked to them, believed, and were baptized. Their success was getting to be a very serious matter with these rulers. Let the people once embrace the idea that Jesus was the Messiah, and the solid walls of Jerusalem would tremble under the question as to why he was put to death and who were responsible for his crucifixion. Let this religion go on spreading among the people as it was doing under the preaching of these humble, illiterate men, and the very foundation-stones of the venerable system of prelatical authority and rabbinical power would be shaken by the moral tornado. Let the fact be accepted that Jesus had risen from the dead, and away would go the doctrine of the Sadducees that there was no res-

urrection. The fears for the safety of their great ecclesiastical monopoly with head-quarters in the temple, which led them to demand of Pilate the blood of Jesus, were now re-enforced by apprehensions for their own personal safety. The car of salvation, regardless of all obstructions which they were able to place on the track, continued to move on. The sick and the afflicted, both in Jerusalem and from surrounding cities, were brought to the apostles in such numbers that they had to be laid on couches in the streets to be healed. The Jewish authorities saw that something must be done to prevent the spread of this dangerous heresy. Peter and John were again arrested and thrown into prison. But during the night the armless hand that wrote upon Belshazzar's palace-wall opened their prison doors,

and the mysterious visitor bade them come forth and go into the temple and speak the words of life to the people. Day-break found them in the temple, boldly proclaiming the gospel of the Son of God. When the high-priest and the council and all the senate of Israel met to deal with the prisoners, they ordered that they be brought into court. The officer who had been dispatched on this errand returned and reported that he found all the doors securely locked, the keepers at their posts, but the prison empty! Before the court had time to recover from this startling announcement some one informed them that their prisoners were in the temple teaching their hated doctrine to the people. They sent their officers to the temple after them. The arrest was made, but we are told it was done without violence.

A wholesome respect for public opinion warned them to proceed with prudence and circumspection. Strange spectacle! In the city of Jerusalem, within the shadow of the cross on which their leader died, in sight of the grave where he was buried and the judgment-hall where he was condemned, a handful of Galilean peasants had so shaken the great city with their teachings and their works, that the rulers of Israel felt that it was necessary to proceed with caution in laying hands upon the insignificant men who had produced the great commotion.

Peter and John found themselves a second time prisoners at the bar of the great council. The high-priest, throwing into his bearing and voice, it may be supposed, as much emphasis and sternness as he could command, in

substance said to them: "When you were before us the other day we commanded you to teach no more in *that name.* In utter contempt of our authority, and in defiant disobedience of our commands, you have filled Jerusalem with your teachings, and *intend to bring this man's blood upon us.* What have you to say in explanation or defense of your rebellious conduct?" The undaunted Peter, like a rock in nature as in name, stood unmoved before them, and, surveying the court with intrepid bearing, replied: "We owe a higher allegiance to God than even to the august presence in which we now stand. Whatever may be your claims or pretensions, you are the murderers of the Son of God. Him whom ye cruelly and unjustly murdered God has exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour to give re-

pentance and remission of sins to Israel. We are witnesses of these things, and mean to proclaim them to the world, your commands and interdicts to the contrary notwithstanding. If that be treason to the commonwealth of Israel, make the most of it." The issue was distinctly and clearly made. There was no room for doubt or misunderstanding. The crisis had come. It must be met. In the opinion of the court there was but one way to meet it. The men who thus defied their authority and imperiled their safety must die. Nothing but blood could atone for the insult and avert the impending danger. At this juncture Gamaliel, the preceptor of Saul of Tarsus, arose. The sacred record speaks of him as "a doctor of the law, had in honor of all the people." Requesting that the prisoners be removed from

the presence of the court, he proceeded to remonstrate with the council on the decision to which they had come. He appealed to them to pause and reflect seriously and calmly on what they were about to do. He referred them to precedents in Jewish history where impostors had arisen, had their day of consequence and sensation, and passed to the shades of oblivion. He concluded his address in these memorable words: "And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will be overthrown; but if it is of God, ye will not be able to overthrow them; lest haply ye be found even to be fighting against God."

The advice of Gamaliel would seem to be good on general principles, but whether from the stand-point of those

to whom it was addressed it would meet the exigences of the situation was not at all clear or manifest. It might be well enough, ordinarily and under different circumstances, to leave the religion of Christ to the logic of events and the test of time; but the chief priest and his coadjutors more than doubted whether, in view of the clouds which they saw rising with ominous mutterings above the horizon, they could safely await that slow, and to them painful, and it might be dangerous, process. They saw the city of Jerusalem stirred by some mighty impulse, and whether the body of their crucified victim had broken the seal of the sepulcher and eluded the vigilance of the Roman guard—in a word, had risen from the grave or not—his spirit seemed to be alive and working mightily among the people. We have only

to imagine in what condition the acceptance by the people of Israel that Jesus was the Messiah, and had indeed arisen from the dead, would have placed those who were responsible for his death, to measure the personal interest his murderers had in preventing such a catastrophe. They were determined, by all the means at their command, to avert the rising storm and stay the tide that threatened to sweep over them. The sacred record informs us that they agreed to what Gamaliel said. They acquiesced in his sage counsel, so far as to refrain from taking the lives of the apostles at that time; but they had no idea of acting on his advice as a settled policy in reference to the matter. For the present, as the best thing available, they sent for the prisoners, *beat* them, and after again commanding them to

speak no more in the name of Jesus, discharged them. Their hand was held back from shedding the blood of their prisoners, not by the soundness of Gamaliel's argument or the strength of his reasoning. The state of public opinion and the fear of popular indignation alone withheld the meditated blow. They felt *then* that blood-letting was the only remedy, and they would have applied it gladly if they had felt safe in venturing so far upon the patience and temper of the people. Between those haughty and powerful representatives of a religious past, who had pushed their opposition to the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth to the point of taking his life, and the humble apostles and advocates of his religion, the conflict could not be otherwise than irrepressible. The moderate and conservative

counsels of Gamaliel only served the purpose of tiding over an embarrassing difficulty and opening up an avenue of temporary escape from an awkward and perplexing dilemma. But matters could not be allowed to progress as they were now proceeding. The contest must go on. The murderers of Christ could not afford to stand still and see the people rallying under the standard of the cross and accepting Jesus as their Messiah. It was equally certain that Peter and his colleagues, under some impulse, moved by some power, were determined not to remain silent, but to continue to preach Jesus and the resurrection in defiance of all the power that the Jerusalem *coterie* could bring to bear against them. To all human appearances the struggle was a very unequal one, and promised to result in the overthrow of

the weak and insignificant body of men that dared to oppose the wishes and disobey the commands of the great and learned men who were seeking their suppression. The fearless intrepidity displayed by the little band of apostles was wonderful. They were not wild visionaries or enthusiasts. They came from the ordinary walks of life, where, in common with their countrymen of like station, they were striving by honest and humble toil to make a livelihood for themselves and their families. They were men of good practical common sense, whose training had never led them along the line of theoretical speculation or scientific abstraction. They knew nothing of the niceties and subtleties of scholastic disputation. They had nothing, and pretended to have nothing, to offer to any man more than

the Master had offered—a life of self-denial and self-consecration here in this world, and eternal life in the world to come. They held out to those to whom they preached no wealth or honor or worldly distinction. On the contrary, they taught that all who came to Christ must take up and bear the cross, mortify the flesh, and curb those passions in which human nature is most prone to indulge and finds its highest pleasure in gratifying. They found human nature strongly intrenched behind the ramparts of self-indulgence and carnal appetite—in fact, in open rebellion against the requirements and doctrines of the religion they sought to propagate and to persuade men to embrace. Rome, so far as she had deigned to take notice of the new religion at all, could not be numbered among its friends. By her

consent and under her authority the tragedy of Calvary had been enacted. The commonwealth of Israel, that claimed to be the sole depository and custodian of the only true religion on earth, and the exclusive friend and favorite of the only true God, was the open, active, and aggressive foe of this new religion, as they esteemed and regarded Christianity. If there was anywhere on earth a single element of influence or power on the side of Christianity outside the little band headed by Peter, it is difficult to find or point it out. For its present fate, for its future destiny the kingdom of Jesus Christ was in the custody of a little company of illiterate men; with all the social, political, and ecclesiastical power of the world, re-enforced by the carnal affections and passions of the human heart, arrayed against

it. Yet it is a fact which sacred as well as profane history attests—a fact which is not and can not be denied—that the conquests of the cross, even in the face of all this opposition, were pushed by somebody or by some agency, not only throughout Judea, but the seeds of the kingdom were sown broadcast throughout the Roman empire, and in the city of Rome itself. Tacitus says, as we have already seen, that after Pilate had executed Jesus "the deadly superstition, repressed for awhile, broke out again, not only through Judea, the original seat of the evil, but through the city also, whither from every side all things horrible or shameful flow together and come into vogue." This spread of Christianity throughout Judea and the Roman empire is also attested by the sacred record. When Jesus was

crucified, Peter and his associates who had followed Christ went back in despair to their nets, intending, of course, to resume their old avocations and to make, as best they could, a living for themselves and families. Why did they not continue to do so? What other help or hope had they? What power or influence was it that called them a second time from their nets and lifted them to an elevation that fixed them in the eyes of the world forever, and enabled them to push forward the greatest revolution that has ever made its impress upon the history of the world and the destiny of man? These humble men do not claim of themselves to have done any thing, or of themselves to have been able to do any thing. And who shall say they were not correct? Everywhere, upon all occasions, whatever

they said or did or claimed to do, they disclaimed in the most solemn manner that they did it of themselves or by their own power; and when they say that to themselves belongs not the credit of any thing that was achieved no one need be astonished at such a declaration. For who ever thought them capable of planning and perfecting any scheme by their own unaided natural ability in the face of such fearful odds? The question recurs and demands of fair-minded men an answer: If all the powers of this earth, which men invoke to win success and achieve results; if the wickedness of the human heart and the enmity of the carnal mind; if the overshadowing dominion of imperial Rome and the ancient ecclesiasticism of Jerusalem; if all the forces of this world—natural, political, and eccle-

siastical—were in combination against them; their great leader, on whose arm they had leaned in every emergency and whose footsteps they had followed, dead and buried, and these men were so insignificant and inconsequential in the social, political, and ecclesiastical world as to be unable to command the respect or even to arrest the attention of any one whose support was worth seeking to any cause which such humble men might espouse; if all this be true—and who can or does gainsay a single proposition stated?—what power or agency wrought the tremendous results which everybody must admit were achieved? Peter and his humble co-laborers say it was all done by the power of God; that Jesus promised before his death to indue them with power, and bade them tarry at Jerusalem until

the promised power should come; that the promised baptisms of the Holy Ghost and of fire came as promised; and that all that was done proceeded alone from the power thus promised and thus conferred upon them. If this claim, on their part, of the possession of divine power is to be discarded, to what quarter shall we turn for a solution of what took place? We have seen who and what Peter was when, as an unanointed fisherman, leaning on his own strength as a man merely, on that memorable night in the court of the high-priest he quailed and trembled in the presence of the enemies who had his Master in custody, and who on the accusation of a maid denied with a solemn oath that he was a follower of Jesus or even knew him. We have seen who and what Peter was when, claiming to be filled with the Holy

Ghost on the Day of Pentecost, in the presence of assembled Jerusalem, he boldly preached Jesus and the resurrection; and when as a prisoner before the great Sanhedrim, in the presence of the rulers of Israel, he not only fearlessly avowed himself a follower of the dead and risen Saviour, but charged the judges before whom he stood as being the murderers of Christ, and before their faces defied their authority. Peter on the night of the denial, and Peter on the Day of Pentecost, and Peter before the Sanhedrim — who is prepared to say in a spirit of candor and fairness that this is the same man? On the one occasion we see simply Simon Peter, a humble fisherman, trembling for his safety and denying even a knowledge of his imprisoned Master; on the other we behold Peter, the great apostle of

the Jews, walking the mountain-ranges of moral power and displaying a sublime courage before which the robed and mitered power of the temple stood silent. What had come over this man? What had lifted this obscure and unknown peasant into a position of moral grandeur and influence that is felt and admired even to this day, nineteen hundred years after the marvelous transformation? Between the denial of Jesus by Peter and the Day of Pentecost and his arraignment before the Sanhedrim but a short time had elapsed, and the wonderful change in Peter had occurred somehow, in some manner, during that interval. The deep conviction which had entered his mind, that Jesus had risen from the dead, all the fires of subsequent persecution could not burn out of him. The inspiration that swelled

his soul and lifted him to a plane of moral grandeur which neither he nor those who knew him even conceived possible in the case of such a man took possession of him suddenly, strangely, unaccountably, and remained with him through all the scenes of a stormy and eventful life to his martyr's grave, where he put the seal of his blood to the sincerity of his convictions and the omnipotence of his faith.

The difficulty of accounting for the rise and progress and indestructibility of Christianity is by no means removed by a simple denial—so easy to make—of the account given of Christ and the apostles in the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. The unbeliever may arbitrarily say: "All this is false; no such sermon was ever preached by Peter on the Day of Pentecost; no such scenes as are described ever took place before the

Sanhedrim; the details of the lives and labors of Peter and his colleagues as given in the Acts of the Apostles—the whole story is fiction, an invention." Very well; Christianity is in the world. That is a fact, and not a fiction. When Christ died he left no great or influential friends in the world. That is a fact, and not a fiction. Somebody or something took up his cause and spread it among the nations, with all the powers of Rome and Jerusalem marshaled in diabolical combination to suppress it. That is a fact, and not a fiction. Somebody or something clothed it in an armor where the sword of Cæsar could not reach it, nor the spear of the soldier that was thrust into the side of its Founder pierce it. That is a fact, and not a fiction. It lives to-day in millions of human hearts, and still marches

on in its conquest of the world. That is a fact, and not a fiction. How did it get into the world? Who or what has sustained its life while before its face nations have risen and fallen, dynasties have perished, thrones have crumbled, kings and conquerors have come and gone, and it still lives on and on, as fresh, as young, as warm, as vigorous as when the heart-throbs of its immortal love beat in the bosom of Peter on the Day of Pentecost?

> Unchanged, undecaying, its Pentecost flame
> On the heart's secret altar is burning the same.

What power supports it? what everlasting arms have been around it through the mutations of time, shielding it from danger and preserving it from death? We trace the life of the humble carpenter's son as seemingly of his own motion he glides noiselessly

from the hills of Nazareth and begins his strange mission on the earth, listen to his teachings as he goes about doing good, behold him expire on the cross and go down to the grave, and stand silent in the presence of what he has achieved. We follow the footsteps of Peter as he lays down his nets by the seaside to become leader of the little band of humble men and women that took up the cause that fell from the Master's pierced and bleeding hands, and as we read the story of this poor fisherman's marvelous career the silence deepens and the wonder grows. Was Jesus simply a man? Was Peter only a man without divine power and inspiration? He who can answer these questions in the affirmative is prepared to accept greater miracles than any ascribed to Jesus in the Gospels.

Among the three thousand who embraced Christianity on the Day of Pentecost under the preaching of Peter there were doubtless some of the very men who had cried out "Crucify him!" when Pilate sought to evade signing the death-warrant of Jesus. These were Jews, for as yet Peter had not offered the gospel to the Gentiles. But it was intended for all mankind, Gentile as well as Jew. This great fact Peter had not yet taken in, but soon the far-reaching and all-embracing scope of the religion of Christ was unfolded. The theater of its operations must be enlarged. Its first offer was to the Jews, its first struggles were at Jerusalem, but it was meant for other peoples and other lands as well. Under the leadership of Peter it had achieved triumphs that stamped the seal of divinity upon

it; but a great organizing mind was needed to give form and system and cohesion and organic union to the different societies of Christians that had sprung up, and to disseminate the glad tidings among the nations. Christianity reached forth her hand and laid it on the head of Saul of Tarsus and anointed him for the great work—the last man in Jerusalem or in the world likely to become a missionary of the hated cross to the despised Gentiles. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, saith the Lord."

III.

Paul.

If the Christian religion is a myth, a fable, a fraud, the life of St. Paul presents an enigma very difficult of solution by the ordinary rules that measure human conduct, or the recognized influences that touch the springs of human action.

The great apostle of the Gentiles was a Jew. From the time that Moses organized them as a people, and gave to them laws and national institutions, the descendants of Abraham have stood out on the pages of history as a unique and peculiar people. Distinguished by the characteristic of a revealed religion, and illuminated by the rays of prophetic light, their wonderful and eventful

career is unparalleled in the history of the human race. Through all the mutations of time and the pressure of surrounding circumstances they have preserved and retained the features and characteristics that separated them from other peoples and other nations. Although at some periods of their history they failed to live up to the light that was given them, and became infected with the idolatry of those by whom they were surrounded, the light was never allowed to be totally extinguished, and under the discipline of punishment and suffering they turned to it for help and comfort, as the mariner searches the heavens for his guiding-star when night and the tempest have gathered around him. For more than five centuries before the birth of Christ—indeed, ever after their return from the cap-

tivity of Babylon to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple—they abandoned idolatrous practices, and became steadfast worshipers of one God. True he was in their estimation the God of Israel and not of the human race, but in the main they adhered consistently to their monotheistic principles. Recognizing the fact that a failure to remain faithful to the religion and laws once delivered to them had brought disaster upon them, they determined by a return to the old paths and the ancient landmarks to re-establish their neglected social polity, and to rehabilitate their wrecked and wasted nationality. To this end they resolved to prohibit, as far as possible, all intercourse with other nations. They drew around themselves a sacred circle which none might enter. They were the elect and chosen people of God,

and intercourse with other nations outside the circumference of the charmed circle was strictly forbidden. All foreign and extraneous influences were religiously excluded, so that nothing might interfere with the covenant between them and their God. They shut themselves up in an exclusiveness and isolation that barred the entrance to all outside opinions, culture, and literature. There was not an aperture through which the smallest ray of external influence might reach them which they did not seek to seal against its entrance. The whole religious life of the nation was brought under a discipline that caused it to move with the regularity and precision of a machine. The rabbis prescribed rules and formulated observances for nearly every private and individual as well as religious act of

the people. The very food and raiment and avocations of the people, as well as their religious worship, were brought under rabbinical surveillance and control. The character of the vessels used in preparing their food and those out of which they ate it when placed on the table, the water to be used in the different kinds of cleansings and purifications of the person and the vessel for daily use were all prescribed with a wearisome detail and minute particularity almost incredible. The very aspirations of the human heart in its efforts to commune with God were made the subject of specific direction, and prayer itself was made to obey mechanical rules and regulations. To become a learned man among them it was not only necessary to commit to memory the five books of Moses, but to become

familiar also with the numerous and voluminous commentaries of the rabbis, which in itself imposed a labor Herculean in its character. All other knowledge, all other learning were not only not worth the time and labor of acquisition, but were placed under the ban of prohibition. But the path to rabbinical distinction and honor was open to all, and the humblest man among them might aspire to the proudest elevation. The priesthood was an hereditary order, and derived its title from Aaron. In time the rabbis acquired a standing and influence superior to the position of the priesthood itself. It was made a religious duty to teach every child to read, and every boy was required to learn the law. All opinions not sanctioned by the priests and rabbis were repudiated and condemned as evil, and the people

were trained in the belief that the system of Judaism as proclaimed and administered by ecclesiastical authority was in its minutest details a revelation from God. The system touched the private and religious life of the Jew at every point. It was a close corporation, that not only fenced the nation in from all outward intrusion and innovation, but absorbed the individuality of the citizen and dried up the fountains of original thought and shackled the freedom of independent action. The time of the people was employed in a series of feasts, prayers, alms, fastings, offerings, purifications, observances, and ceremonies of various kinds which constituted a routine of ecclesiastical tyranny and oppression which made human life a burden. The divine law, delivered to them in its wisdom and

purity, had become corrupted and obscured, and many of its most vital and essential parts entirely hidden under the mass of rites and symbols and ceremonies and traditions that had been heaped upon it. But, notwithstanding this mutilation and profanation of the law, it must not be lost sight of that the Jew had a conception of God to which the Gentile was a stranger. In the language of another: "There was a light on all the mountains of Judea which never shone on Olympus or Parnassus." And although the Saviour had to encounter this ancient and iron-bound system of Judaism in the establishment of his kingdom, it must not be ignored or forgotten that the dispersion of the Jews had disseminated their religion and laws widely among the nations. The light from their synagogues

had thrown its illumination into many quarters of the world, which would otherwise have continued to slumber in the darkness of pagan idolatry and superstition. The soil was thus measurably prepared in many places for the Great Sower when he came to scatter the seeds of his new kingdom. It would be a great mistake to assume that there were not individual instances of devout and pious men among the Jews; that there were no Israelites without guile; that there were none who still retained, in a measure at least, the spirit that inspired the Psalms of David, which to this day constitute the vernacular of the human heart in its endeavors to commune with God. The conquests of Alexander had disseminated the Greek language—"the richest and most delicate that the world has

ever seen"—among the nations. It became the happy medium for transmitting the principles and doctrines of Christianity to mankind. In the course of time the iron arm of Rome was lifted among the nations. In the twenty-ninth year before Christ the Temple of Janus was closed. The wars of Sylla and Marius and Pompey and Cæsar had resulted in the triumph of Augustus, and he ruled the nations of the earth at the birth of Christ. The proud city on the Tiber was indeed the mistress of the world. Her arms encircled the nations, and held them together under one head. Her power, like the rays of the sun, penetrated to the most distant lands. All parts of the world being thus bound and held together under the powerful domination and protection of Rome, the facilities for travel and intercourse

among its various and widely-separated parts were multiplied, and communication was made comparatively easy to all who owned her sway and bowed to her scepter. When the wild elements of war had subsided, and the earth reposed in the arms of peace, Christ was born. The religion of Judea, the language of Greece, and the power of Rome seemed to have been marshaled to aid his cause, and the focal rays of three civilizations to throw their light upon the kingdom he came to establish—all to be utilized at the proper time under the providence of God to promote and carry forward the grand object of his mission among men. The old pagan religions were lifeless forms, with no claim to any vital energy that could reach the human heart. What St. Paul calls "the dispensation of the fullness of time" seemed to have come.

The political power and national independence of the Jews, in common with other nations, had passed under the Roman yoke and been merged in the dominion of the Cæsars. But this caused them to cling with all the greater tenacity and devotion to their religion and laws, as all that was left them to love and cherish amid the gloom and disaster that had settled upon their fortunes. But they wore the yoke of foreign conquest and alien domination with restless disdain and sullen submission. They regarded the presence of Rome on the sacred soil of Judea as an insult to heaven and treason to God, and they looked anxiously for his avenging arm to be lifted to smite and expel the impious invader.

Among the parties or sects into which the Jews had drifted the Pharisees were

the most powerful and influential. They stood at the front in their zeal and devotion to the traditions of their fathers, the excellency of their law, and the superiority of their religion. They were the propagandists, the missionaries of Judaism. It was the Pharisee who compassed sea and land to make one proselyte. Enthusiastic in their devotion to the glory of Israel, they were revolutionary and aggressive in their efforts to restore to their suffering country her lost liberties and ancient renown. They held their God pledged to redeem Israel. They expected him to send one who, placing himself at their head, with all the pomp of an earthly hero, and all the prestige of heaven's vicegerent, should expel the legions of Cæsar and re-establish with even more than its former glory the fallen throne

of David. The Messiah for whom they looked and longed and prayed was to be a belted warrior who would lead the invincible armies of Israel to certain and glorious victory against the abhorred and hated foe. The idea of a Messiah who should reform their worship, purify their morals, or improve their religion was far from them. In the estimation of the rulers of Israel they needed no reformation of life or religion. With their fifty-nine feasts a year, and their endless rites and ceremonies and fasts and prayers, they were as holy as they could possibly be made. Between the Messiah of their conception and expectation and Jesus of Nazareth it is difficult to imagine a wider divergence or a more essentially radical and profound difference. The Babe of Bethlehem and the peasant raised in seclu-

sion amid the hills of Nazareth brought with him, when he entered upon his public ministry, none of the credentials calculated to propitiate the favor of those who looked for a conquering hero who was to come with all the imposing pomp of earthly splendor, re-enforced by the power of Israel's God, to transfer the seat of universal empire from Rome to Jerusalem. He was the last one to fill the conditions and meet the Jewish conception of the expected Messiah, not only because of his humble origin and obscure life and unobtrusive bearing, but the doctrine he taught, the principles he sought to inculcate and promulgate were utterly subversive of the vast and complicated ceremonial system which the priests and rabbis had built upon the ruins of the faith once delivered to the saints. An attack upon

their system was an assault upon their social position, their ecclesiastical dignity and authority, as well as their means of livelihood. His teachings, therefore, could not fail to arrest attention and provoke opposition from that quarter. The instinct of self-preservation co-operated with bigotry, ecclesiastical pride and ambition, and the obstinate conservatism of vested rights to put down and suppress the bold innovator. From the beginning of his public ministry they viewed him with no friendly eye and watched him with suspicion. As his ministry proceeded their distrust of him increased. In all his wanderings through Judea and Galilee, and the regions round about, their spies shadowed his journeys, dogged his footsteps, and reported his utterances and actions. Humble as he was in his

origin, modest and unassuming as he had been in his growth to manhood, the multitudes that his authoritative teachings and wonderful works attracted to him signalized him as one not to be despised. The Sermon on the Mount was a declaration of spiritual independence, an emancipation proclamation that announced the freedom of the people from the thralldom in which ecclesiastical tyranny and oppression had bound their very souls. They determined to crush him, and constantly sought an occasion when they might consummate their settled purpose to suppress him and his distasteful and dangerous doctrines. The tragedy of Calvary witnessed the culmination of their predetermined design to exterminate him and prevent the spread of his teachings. The Pharisees took a leading part in

this, as in every important event that affected the interest of Judaism.

To this powerful and aggressive party Saul of Tarsus belonged. He was in thorough sympathy with them in all their religious views and political aspirations. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews—a Pharisee and the son of a Pharisee. From his infancy he had been thus trained and indoctrinated; he imbibed their prejudices and principles with his mother's milk; and when he grew to an age to pursue his education away from the paternal roof, while he was yet a boy, not exceeding ten or twelve years of age perhaps, he was sent by his parents from Tarsus to Jerusalem and placed under the tutelage of the renowned and learned Gamaliel, who was likewise a Pharisee, to complete his education. In speaking

of his life up to the time of his conversion to Christianity he says of himself: "After the straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee." There can be no doubt on this point. In his very warp and woof and essence and fiber he was unquestionably a Pharisee. All that the strict and painstaking discipline of the system into which he was born could do to mold the mind and heart in the principles and ambition of a Jewish child, and to ground him in the faith, was done in his case. His sympathy with the Jerusalem hierarchy and the rabbinical *coterie* that wrung from the temporizing Pilate a reluctant death-sentence in the case of the Jews against Jesus was thorough and profound. From the period when he left Tarsus, a small boy, to enter the school of Gamaliel at Jerusalem to the mar-

tyrdom of Stephen the record is silent as to his history. These periods cover a considerable space of time. Whether, after completing his education at Jerusalem, he returned to his father's house at Tarsus or continued to reside in Jerusalem is a matter of conjecture; but he was certainly in Jerusalem before the death of Stephen, and took a leading part with the mob that murdered him. Between the time when he first entered Jerusalem as a boy and the death of Stephen great and startling events had transpired. Jesus had performed his mighty works in Galilee and Judea and the regions round about Jerusalem. He had been condemned by the Jews and crucified by Pilate, had been buried, and, as his disciples claimed, had arisen from the dead. The Day of Pentecost, with its wonder-

ful displays of divine power, had come and gone. Peter and John were preaching Jesus and the resurrection throughout Jerusalem, and had been twice arrested and brought as prisoners before the Great Council, who had been forced, as we have seen, by public opinion, to discharge them. Thousands were flocking to the standard of the cross, and all Jerusalem was in commotion over the strange things that were transpiring. The efforts of the rulers to suppress the friends of Jesus had only resulted in intensifying their zeal and increasing the spread of their doctrines among the people. It was not long before the zealous and successful labors of Stephen led to the arrest and arraignment before the Council of that fearless and devoted herald of the cross. Saul of Tarsus was present at his trial, if in-

deed he did not cause his arrest. He heard the defense of Stephen, who reviewed the history of the Jews from Abraham to Moses and from Moses to Christ, whom he declared to be the Messiah, and boldly charged the judges before whom he stood with having murdered him. On two occasions prior to this, as has been seen, Peter had thrown this charge into their teeth, and they had been compelled by circumstances beyond their control to curb their indignation and submit. It was to them a sore subject—a charge which, in the existing state of the public mind, they felt seriously menaced their personal safety and cast a reproach upon them, under which they grew the more impatient and intolerant the oftener it was repeated. When, therefore, Stephen repeated the accusation, their rage broke through all re-

straint. The case was desperate, and demanded heroic treatment. Forgetting the dignity of their position, and oblivious of the judicial character in which they had convened, regardless of all the legal rights of the prisoner, they became a wild and tumultuous mob intent on taking the life of their victim without even the formality of a judicial sentence. Conspicuous in this work was "a young man named Saul." Stephen was stoned to death, and the blood of the first martyr mingled with that of his Master upon the red hands of his murderers. The fierce and implacable leaders of the temple had chosen their course, and, to use a modern but expressive phrase, determined to "stamp out" this new and dangerous heresy. We use the phrase in reference to cattle infected with pleuro-pneumonia, and the process

consists in killing those that have contracted the disease to prevent its spread. The same process was determined upon by these guilty, infuriated, and frightened leaders to prevent the dissemination of Christianity by killing those who had become tainted with the dreaded and alarming infection. Foremost among those who went forth in the carnival of persecution to carry out this programme of blood was Saul of Tarsus. Young, zealous, fearless, and ambitious, he performed his part with relentless and remorseless cruelty and oppression. Nothing restrained him. Not even the sage suggestions and moderate and conservative counsels of his old preceptor, Gamaliel, served to cool his ardor or stay his hand. He invaded, ruthlessly and brutally, the very sanctity of domestic life, and spared neither age nor sex.

The sacred historian thus summarizes his exploits and labors: "But Saul laid waste the Church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison." The terror-stricken disciples of Christ fled from the city in every direction. After a thorough canvass of Jerusalem he determined to go out on a missionary tour to hunt down those who had made their escape and fled to other places to avoid his merciless persecution. He applied to the high-priest for letters of authority to Damascus, that he might arrest all whom he could find in that city. Deep in the confidence and counsels of the leaders of his people, thoroughly in sympathy with their plans and policy, it was the pride of his life and the height of his ambition to put forth every effort in his power to carry out the pur-

pose which they had so much at heart. Whether he had been all the while a resident of Jerusalem since the beginning of the public ministry of Christ or had spent a portion of that time at Tarsus, he felt too profound an interest in all the questions that had arisen not to have been thoroughly informed on every phase of the controversy and not to have been familiar with every step that had been taken in the premises, both by the Jerusalem leaders and the disciples of Christ. The public ministry of Jesus, culminating in his crucifixion, the career of his apostles in Jerusalem after his death, had created too profound an impression and given the leaders of Israel too much uneasiness and alarm for one occupying the position of a rabbi and a member of the Sanhedrim, as Saul did, to have been ignorant of

any material fact that had transpired or any important step that had been taken. According to his own account he must have been present as a member of the court where Christians were tried and condemned to death. In these trials he must have become conversant, if he was not before, with the whole subject. He says himself, in speaking of what he did in Jerusalem: "And I both shut up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, and *when they were put to death*, I gave my *vote* against them." He had therefore trodden under foot and thrown from him with scorn all the credentials that Christianity had presented for his consideration in attestation of its divine origin and its truth, and remained not only unchanged, unconvinced, and unconverted, but stood forth its sworn,

active, and aggressive foe. The lessons of his infancy and youth, the wonderful discipline of the religion in which he was born and reared, the bias of education, his associations at Jerusalem, the proud position which, though a young man, he had won among the fathers and the great and learned men of Israel, his pride in the glorious history and traditions of his race—all conspired to make him the very incarnation of religious intolerance and ecclesiastical ambition. Thus grounded, thus indoctrinated, thus inspired, burning with a desire to inscribe his name high on the roll of honor, this rising young Israelite, bearing the high commission of the hierarchy, set out from Jerusalem to the ancient city of Damascus believing, as firmly as he believed the temple stood, that Jesus was an impostor and that

his religion was a pestiferous heresy which loyalty to Israel and Israel's God demanded should be exterminated. Thoroughly versed in the learning of his day, endowed with an intellect of the very first order, inflexible in purpose, tireless in energy, zealous, enthusiastic, aggressive in whatever he undertook, and a stranger to fear, he was invaluable as a friend and dangerous as an enemy to any cause he might espouse or oppose. Among all their shining ranks, the rulers of the Jews could have found no lieutenant better equipped at every point to complete their recent victory by the pursuit and capture of the scattered and flying disciples of Christ. And the fact must not be forgotten that Saul did not proceed on this expedition as a subaltern sent by a superior officer to execute an unpleasant

and disagreeable order. He was a volunteer, and applied for the commission.

The distance from Jerusalem to Damascus by the usually-traveled route was about one hundred and thirty-six miles, and the journey by the ordinary mode of travel would be made probably in about six days. We have none of the incidents or details of the expedition on the way. In about ten days, or at farthest two weeks, after he left Jerusalem with his escort, or *posse comitatus*, this man is found preaching Jesus and the resurrection in the synagogues of Damascus! A more profound transformation, a more radical revolution, a more thorough change in the heart, mind, views, purposes—in fact, in the entire nature and character—of a man can not be conceived. That some overpowering influence, some mighty and irresist-

ible agency was brought to bear on him between Jerusalem and Damascus, or soon after his arrival at the latter place, can not be controverted. From what source did that mighty transforming influence, that transmuting and revolutionizing power, that mental and moral convulsion emanate?

The power and process by which the astounding change was wrought are given by Luke in the Acts of the Apostles and twice by Saul himself—once before the Jews at Jerusalem, and again before King Agrippa at Cæsarea. Briefly, the account given in the sacred record is as follows: When he came near Damascus, at midday, a great light from heaven shone round about him and those who were in company with him. They all witnessed it and experienced its effect. He fell to the ground,

and heard a voice saying: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Although greatly surprised and startled by the wonderful display, he seems not to have lost his mind, but responded: "Lord, who art thou?" The reply came: "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest." He then said to the unexpected and mysterious apparition: "What shall I do, Lord?" The reply came: "Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do." He arose to go, but found that he was blind and could not see the way, and had to be led by those who were with him. He was taken to a house in the city, where he remained for three days in a state of total blindness, and partaking of no food or nourishment during that time. At the end of that

time he was visited by one Ananias, and what took place then is thus recorded in the account given by Saul to the Jews in Jerusalem: "And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well reported of by all the Jews that dwelt there, came unto me, and standing by me said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And in that very hour I looked upon him. And he said, The God of our fathers hath appointed thee to know his will, and to see the Righteous One, and to hear a voice from his mouth. For thou shalt be a witness for him unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name." He then took food and was strengthened.

Now if this account of the cause and

manner of the marvelous transformation which took place in the man be accepted as true, the question of the resurrection of Christ and the divinity of his religion must be received as true. But of course those who deny the claim of Christianity to a divine origin are not prepared to accept this account which Saul has given of his conversion. It has been suggested that he was the victim of a shrewd and artfully-planned scheme of deception and imposition. But who among those who may be supposed to have been friendly to such a design was capable of conceiving and executing such a plan? Whence came the great light, excelling in splendor the brightness of an Eastern sun? Who furnished the fire-works that produced the phenomenal illumination at midday? Who represented or personated

Jesus in the conversation that took place? Whence came the power that struck Saul blind for three days, and then restored him to sight as suddenly as he had been deprived of it? The manifestations that are detailed as having taken place were clearly beyond the exercise of any merely human power. Any hypothesis, therefore, based on the idea that the followers of Christ concocted and produced the wonderful phenomena must be discarded as unworthy of serious consideration. Again, it has been said that Saul, although honest and sincere in the statement made, was laboring under a mistake or a delusion. This solution of the difficulty is equally unworthy of acceptance. To refer the numerous facts stated to delusion or mistake is simply to discredit and discard human testimony as an instru-

mentality in the establishment of facts. To say that a man who tells such a story thought he was telling the truth, although what he narrates did not occur at all, is simply to trifle with the subject. As he traveled along the highway in company with his friends, he *knew* whether that supernatural light appeared or not, and whether it struck the whole party with consternation or not. He *knew* whether he was in a state of total blindness for the space of three days or not. He *knew* whether he abstained from all food for three days or not. He *knew* when he arose from the ground to go into Damascus whether he was able to see the road or not. He *knew* whether he had to be led by his friends or not. He *knew* whether his sight was restored to him as suddenly as he had lost it. He gives the conversa-

tion in detail that passed between the strange person and himself. He *had* that conversation, or he *invented* it. He *knew* whether or not he had the interview which he relates with Ananias after he got into the city. What he states as having transpired between himself and Ananias occurred, or he *manufactured* the story. In a word, the account he has given of his conversion is true or it is false, it is made up of real facts or conscious falsehoods. If a man is not allowed to know such facts as are detailed by Saul let him stand universally discredited as a competent witness to prove any fact. Reader, put yourself in Saul's place—for he is your equal in point of candor and intelligence, whatever your claims to sincerity or ability may be.

Suppose you start with a party of

friends to go to the city of New York, and afterward publish an account of your trip, in which you state that when the party arrived in sight of the city, about 12 o'clock in the day, suddenly a great light, far exceeding in splendor the light of the sun, illuminated the way, filling the whole company with alarm, so much so that you fell to the ground; and as you lay there had a conversation with a man who accosted you; narrate what he said to you and what you said to him; that he finally told you to go into the city of New York and you should there receive further instructions; that when you arose to go you found that you were blind and could not see the road, and had to be led by the friends who were with you; that you were taken to a certain house in the city, and staid there for three days in a state of total blind-

ness, not eating a morsel or drinking a drop during the whole time; that at the end of the three days a certain well-known man of character and standing, whose name you give, came to you and spoke to you, and immediately your sight was restored. Now, if you are in your right mind when you pen such a narrative, can there be any doubt that you know and must know whether you are telling the truth or writing a falsehood? And will you not know further that every member of your party will stand ready to support it if true, and to brand it as a lie if false, including the reputable citizen with whom you claim to have had the interview in the city? Your sanity being conceded when you state the facts, one of two things must follow: you have told the truth or penned a deliberate and conscious falsehood.

Mistake in the premises is inadmissible. If not, then human testimony is inadmissible to establish facts. The facts stated are too numerous, they are of a character too impressive, and to Saul involved consequences too vital and important for him as a sane man to be deceived or mistaken as to whether they occurred or not. There is no pretense that Saul was insane or demented at the time he makes the statements contained in the account of his conversion. When he appeared before Agrippa at Cæsarea, and had finished his account before the king, Festus, who was present and heard the statement, not questioning the sincerity of Saul at all, seems to have referred his marvelous narration to mental aberration, and exclaimed in a loud voice: "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth

make thee mad." With a dignity becoming the solemnity of the theme on which he had spoken, and a courtesy due to the presence in which he stood, he replied: "*I am not mad*, most noble Festus, but speak the words of *truth* and *soberness!*" To this account of his conversion he adhered with undeviating consistency throughout all the remainder of his life, again and again in the most solemn and impressive manner affirming its truth in his Epistles and to the brethren and the Churches. No one will have the rashness to assert that the author of the Epistle to the Romans, the Epistle to the Corinthians, and of the other productions that bear his name, which have survived the ravages of time, and are destined to live far into the unmeasured future, was a man of unsound mind or feeble understand-

ing. Taking into account the life of Paul prior to his conversion and his career after that time, every reasonable hypothesis is logically excluded from the premises except that of the truth or falsehood of his story.

Let us then consider the question on the supposition that his account is false, that he drew on his imagination for his facts, and that the whole narrative was concocted and invented by its author to excuse and cover his defection from Judaism, and to justify his acceptance of Christianity, and that no divine or supernatural agency figured at all as a factor in producing the result. The question still rises and demands of fair-minded men an answer: What considerations, what agency produced the change?

After he left Jerusalem did some of

the apostles or friends of Jesus meet him on the way to Damascus, and by reference to the Jewish Scriptures make an argument that convinced him that Christ was the Messiah and that his religion was divine? Who among the unlearned and humble men who composed the chosen twelve was capable of giving to this learned rabbi and pupil of Gamaliel any new light upon such a question? Intellectually and in his familiarity with those Scriptures he was vastly the superior of any one of them or all of them combined. And who among all the disciples of Jesus would have ventured to approach him at that time? Were they not fleeing like scattered sheep from this very man, and hiding among the rocks and hills and mountains to escape his vindictive and unrelenting pursuit and persecution? As

well expect the lamb to accost the hungry wolf in the solitude of the forest, and attempt to convince him that it was wrong to devour innocent lambs. As well expect the timid dove to come from her covert and meet the prowling hawk in the air, and by an argument convince him that it was wrong to soil his talons or stain his beak in the blood of a poor little dove. There is no intimation that he had any such interview with any of the disciples on the way to Damascus, and the circumstances make it certain that he did not; and besides, what new argument or fact had disciple or apostle to present to one who heard the argument of Stephen, and responded with a shout to the mob to kill him? What additional reasons had any of the followers of Christ to lay before the man upon whom Christianity had exhausted

all the evidences and arguments she had to offer *before he left Jerusalem?* And then, if he had been honestly convinced by any argument or any fact from any quarter of the truth of Christianity, the fabrication of a stupendous falsehood to excuse or account for his acceptance of it would have been the last thing he would have thought of doing; for no sincere votary of the Christian religion has ever conceived the idea that a falsehood furnished him a passport to heaven. That some great and overpowering influence from some quarter and of some character was exerted on him between Jerusalem and Damascus, and within the space of a week or ten days, has been already suggested, and, indeed, goes without saying. If the assumption that a divine or supernatural power intervened be discarded—if the

story which ascribes his conversion to any such source is an invention and a fraud—the whole question is relegated, of course, for its solution to the domain of merely human motives and human instrumentalities. Moving on this level, men are not indifferent to temporal prosperity or worldly preferment. They do not throw away lightly the advantages that fortune has placed in their hands or the prospects that ambition holds out to their attainment. A man such as all will admit Saul of Tarsus was, in point of ability and respectability, does not change the convictions and opinions of a life-time without a cause. If light from heaven did not break on him and convert him, from what quarter did the influences come that revolutionized his life? He was not driven into opposition to Judaism

by any disappointment in his aspirations or any disagreement with the leaders of the Jerusalem hierarchy. No one of his age stood higher in the confidence and esteem of the great men of his nation than this brilliant and accomplished young rabbi, and no one had brighter prospects or more well-grounded hopes of future distinction and renown among his people. At the very time he renounced Judaism and embraced Christianity he had the commendatory letter of the high-priest in his pocket. What did this renunciation of the old religion and the adoption of the new by him involve, viewed from a worldly or human stand-point?

His acceptance of Christ as the Messiah necessarily implied an admission or a charge on his part that the rulers of Israel, with whom he had been on

terms of the most intimate friendship and confidence, were guilty of the horrible crime of crucifying the Son of God. In view of his relations with those distinguished men, whose cause he had espoused with an earnestness and enthusiasm that must have greatly endeared him to them, it must have cost him a struggle which few earthly considerations could induce an honorable man to overcome, to place himself in the attitude of betraying their friendship and alienating their affections, and bringing on their names an everlasting reproach. He knew—it was impossible for him not to know—that he would forfeit the respect and esteem of all those whose good opinion it had been his pride to wear as a crown of glory. Gamaliel, the revered and learned preceptor under whose guidance his principles had been

formed and his life had been aligned, would regard him as having proved recreant to all the lessons and training of his youth. The high-priest and the Sanhedrim would look upon him as a traitor to all that was glorious and sacred in the history and traditions of Israel, and as a base deserter who had gone over to the enemy he had been commissioned to capture. But the surrender of the proud position he had once occupied, the splendid reputation he had won, the brilliant promise of future distinction and renown that beckoned him onward and upward, the loss of the confidence and respect of his former friends and associates, potential as such considerations are with a man of true and honorable instincts, were not the only dispiriting and unwelcome reflections that would press themselves

upon him as he contemplated the step he was about to take. He knew in addition that he must necessarily incur the undying hatred and active malice of all those who were in any manner responsible for the crucifixion of Christ. Whatever others might think or do, he knew that those men with whom he had been in an alliance and sympathy as close as can subsist among men *could not afford* to have their murdered victim accepted by the people of Israel as the Messiah. Such a result, even if it did not imperil their personal safety, could not fail to blast their names with a reproach which time would be too short to obliterate. He knew that they had determined to crush out, by the strong arm of persecution and punishment, the rising sentiment which proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah, and that their policy had been

adopted under the pressure of the fearful consideration that such a result as Jesus being recognized as the Messiah would be disastrous to all who had been instrumental in his death. To this policy, as has been seen, Saul himself was committed soul and body. When, therefore, he gave in his adhesion to the truth of the claims which the followers of Christ were making, he knew very well that persecution, stripes, imprisonment, and perhaps death, awaited him. But he laid aside his proud position as a Jewish rabbi and a member of the Sanhedrim, the admiration and confidence of all the leading men of Israel, a bright and glorious future that loomed up before him, to become—what? A loathed and hunted and hounded missionary of the cross. Why did he make such a change and such a choice? He

has answered the question, but the unbeliever says his answer is false. Then let such a one suggest an answer that will stand the test of reason and human experience. If the account he has given is false his motives do not rise above the plane of worldly ambition and selfishness. O ye who brand him with falsehood, point out upon the path he elected to tread any laurel that human ambition could hope to gather, any of the rewards that selfishness could expect to reap, or any of the ends that hypocrisy could desire to achieve. Christianity never sought to dazzle the eye of human ambition by displaying positions of worldly renown—to enlist the friendship of the avaricious by promises of wealth, or to win the favor of the hypocrite and dissembler by suggesting schemes to cheat mankind. And if she

had attempted to hold out such rewards to those who were seeking to better their worldly estate her condition at the time Saul of Tarsus espoused her cause offered a poor guaranty of her ability to meet such expectations or to redeem such promises, with her Founder crucified as a criminal, and her humble votaries flying in consternation and dismay before the uplifted arm of persecution. As a mere matter of choice, men do not prefer ignominy and disgrace to a proud position and influence among their fellow-men; they do not voluntarily exchange wealth for poverty, the smiles and approval of life-long friends for their contempt and scorn and hate, the temple of Jerusalem for a dungeon, or a life crowded with honors and congenial associations for the lash of persecution and the

curses of the world. It is not in human nature to so act. Yet such was the course pursued by Saul, if the account he has given of his conversion is a fabrication invented by him to cover up a life of imposture and deception. In all the range of human motives, in all the complex and multiform ramifications of the springs of human action, no reasonable solution of the conduct of this man can be found on the hypothesis that the account he has given of his conversion is a falsehood. On the theory of his insincerity, and a purpose on his part to impose a conscious fraud upon the world, his life is a riddle, the key to which has been lost. His career and history up to the time when he left Jerusalem for Damascus, as the trusted and commissioned agent of the Jewish authorities to carry out their chosen

and settled policy toward Christianity, were, as has been seen, all that a rising and ambitious young man could hope or desire in the ancient commonwealth of Israel. To turn his back upon such a record, and enter upon a career of shame and humiliation and persecution and suffering and danger, presents for our candid consideration a marvel and a mystery, the solution of which must be sought elsewhere than on the line of human ambition, self-aggrandizement, or hypocrisy.

But the change that came over him at Damascus consisted not merely of a revolution in his views and opinions of the Messianic character of Jesus, but involved a complete transformation of heart, spirit—the whole moral nature. Not only did the crucified malefactor become in his estimation the chosen one

of God, and his despised religion take on a glory far transcending all the glory that had ever crowned Judaism or been displayed in the temple; but this bitter, malignant, and uncompromising persecutor was transformed into a broad, liberal, tolerant, and devoted friend and lover of the whole human race. The moss-grown wall of partition between the Jew and the Gentile, like the walls of Jericho, had fallen before him at the blast of *some* trumpet. The moral elevation on which he stood at Damascus, compared with the fierce and bitter spirit that burned in his heart when he left Jerusalem, was as the sun-kissed and heaven-crowned summit of the mountain-top to the malarial fens and marshes that lie at its base. What arm lifted him from the miasmatic fogs and noxious vapors of cruelty and per-

secution, and planted his feet firmly on the lofty summit of religious toleration and universal brotherhood, far in advance of the nation to which he belonged and of the age in which he lived? What mighty hand wielded the hammer that broke the incrusted shell of Judaism in which his very soul had been molded and set his imprisoned spirit free, glowing with the inspiration of a new hope and soaring on wings elastic with the energy of a new faith? What deft and cunning fingers uncoiled the serpent of hate from around his heart and caused all its chords to tremble with the music of a new song?

Saul at Jerusalem and Saul at Damascus! Look upon that picture, and then upon this! Name the artist that wrought the mighty change, and say whether, in causing the wonderful trans-

formation to stand out in living hues upon the canvas, he dipped his magic brush in the colors of earth or heaven. Orators have put their fancy and rhetoric and eloquence under tribute to eulogize the intellect and the moral and physical courage of the man. That he was a man of great intellect the writings he has left behind him fully attest. That he possessed both moral and physical courage in a high degree none will deny. But these were nature's gifts, and he brought them with him from Jerusalem. These natural endowments in which he stood pre-eminent, and shared perhaps in common with other great men, are not what is now proposed to be emphasized, but the *change of heart* at Damascus and the moral grandeur that thenceforth marked his extraordinary career. Ever after the

time of his alleged conversion there breathes through all the writings he has left us the widest and profoundest love for the whole human race, the Jew and the Gentile alike, and upon no occasion, under no provocation, however trying, does he give the least countenance or encouragement to persecution for opinion's sake. Whence came this sweet and gentle and all-loving spirit that sung like an angel in his heart for twenty-five years of the most devoted and heroic life recorded in the annals of time?

The persecution which he well knew must follow the enrollment of his name on the roster of the stricken and fleeing disciples of Christ commenced while he was yet at Damascus. After his conversion he began "straightway" to proclaim Jesus and the resurrection in the

synagogues of that city. The Jews, exasperated and outraged beyond measure at what they regarded as his base desertion and flagrant treason, determined to slay him, and had all the streets of the city guarded to prevent his flight. But at night a few faithful friends let him down through the walls of the city, and he eluded the vengeance of his enemies. But whither should he fly for safety? The disciples of Christ feared him and were hiding from him, and the rancor of the Jews left him no hope of mercy from that quarter. What must have been the sense of isolation and loneliness that came over him as in the darkness of the night he alighted from that basket outside the walls of Damascus? He dare not return to Jerusalem. The world was full of enemies, and had but few friends for him. He says that when

Christ gave him his commission to preach the gospel he "conferred not with flesh and blood." "Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me: but I went away into Arabia." As in the solitude and gloom of night he turned his lonely footsteps toward Arabia, how the past in all its vividness must have come up before him! The martyrdom of Stephen, in which he had borne such a conspicuous part; the cruelties which he had inflicted upon the humble disciples of Christ; what the authorities at Jerusalem were saying, and how they were feeling over his conduct since he left that city bearing their commission, which he had failed to execute; how his friends and associates were abashed and chagrined and disappointed when the news of his defection was confirmed—all

this and much more must have passed through his mind as he turned his back upon the associations and memories of a life-time, and took his lonely way under the silent stars into an enforced exile!

Neither the head nor heart of the man is to be envied who can read the story of Saul's subsequent life and sublime death, and doubt the absolute honesty of his purpose and the profound convictions of his soul, when at Damascus he laid down the commission of the high-priest to persecute, and took up the commission of Jesus to preach. The patience with which he met every trial and endured every contradiction; the courage with which he encountered every danger and faced every foe; the equanimity and fortitude with which he moved forward to the discharge of every

duty, without a murmur, without a complaint, coveting no man's money, utterly indifferent to the praise or the censure of the world, working with his own hands for the bread that sustained his life; without bitterness, without revenge; laboring and praying for the good of those who cursed him and maltreated him as well as for the welfare of those who loved him—all demonstrate, beyond reasonable cavil or doubt, an intense earnestness and a sublime purpose that looked forward with unwavering faith to an inheritance "incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." Writing to the Corinthians, he said: Five times I received from the Jews forty stripes save one; thrice was I scourged with the Roman rods, once I was stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have spent in the open sea: in

journeyings often, in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils from my countrymen, in perils from the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren: in toil and weariness, often in sleepless watchings; in hunger and thirst, often without bread to eat; in cold and nakedness. And besides all the rest, there is the crowd which presses upon me daily, and the care of all the Churches. Who is weak, but I share his weakness? Who is caused to fall, but I burn with indignation? If I needs must boast, I will boast of my weakness. God, who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, *knows that I lie not.* And to the Philippians he says: "I have learned, in whatever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both

how to be abased and how to abound; everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need." And again, as he compares the present with the past, he says: "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: *for whom I have suffered* the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." The contrast between his past life and what his life had been since his conversion must have often occurred to him. But never in the midst of the fiercest persecutions, the most humiliating and degrading punishment, the utmost destitution or the gravest danger, was he known to

express a single regret for the course he had taken or a doubt of the divine source from which he claimed to draw the inspiration and the strength to meet every fate with sublime courage and serene equanimity, exclaiming amid it all: "I am troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed."

The Jews never forgave him for what they regarded his treason and desertion of the religion of his fathers. With a vengeance that never relaxed and a malice that never slept, they pursued him to the grave. They must also have recognized in him the master spirit of the new and hated faith. His was the great mind, inspired and directed by the Spirit that entered his soul at Damascus, that organized Christianity in

the East, and pushed its conquests into imperial Rome and into the very household of Cæsar. Before his last visit to Jerusalem, and while on the way, he had premonitions of the fate that would await him there. At Miletus, where he had his last and most affecting interview with the Ephesian elders, he tells them that the future has nothing in store for him but afflictions and bonds. But sublimely rising above all human suffering and danger, he exclaims in the presence of his weeping friends: "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." After his arrival at Cæsarea his friends importuned him with tears

not to go to Jerusalem, as only Jewish vengeance awaited him there. But his purpose was fixed, and nothing could turn him from it. He replied to their entreaties and affectionate solicitude for his safety: "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, *but also to die* at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." He went to Jerusalem. The result is known. He was soon in the hands of a Jewish mob, who clamored for his blood, and would have taken his life if in the uproar he had not been rescued by the Roman soldiery who went out to quell the riot. He asked permission of the captain of the soldiers to address the crowd. This being granted, he proceeded to give a full and circumstantial account of his conversion at Damascus, at the conclusion

of which the Jews derided him and desired to kill him. The Roman captain, not understanding the merits of the controversy between the Jews and Paul, ordered him to be brought into the castle and to be examined by scourging. He now claimed his rights as a Roman citizen, and the scourge was not applied, but he was still retained as a prisoner in the hands of the soldiers. On the next day the captain sent for the chief priest and the council to come before him, that he might if possible get at the merits of the case they had against the prisoner. The controversy that arose before the captain need not be repeated. The crowd dispersed, the captain knowing but little more of the merits of the case than he knew before. The Jews now formed a conspiracy to kill him, and about forty of them bound

themselves with an oath not to eat until they had taken his life. The plan of the conspiracy was that the chief men of the Jews should make application to the captain to have Paul brought before them on the pretext of inquiring further into the case, when the conspirators were to be on hand to slay him. A young man who was a kinsman of Paul, having discovered the plot, informed the captain of it, who, being perplexed and uncertain as to what he should do, but remembering that he was a Roman citizen, had him sent secretly that night to the Governor at Cæsarea. The Jews at Jerusalem, on hearing of this, followed him to Cæsarea. But they were unable to make good any serious charge against Paul; and, baffled at every point, finally made the proposition that he be returned to Jerusalem for trial. Paul

knew what this meant—his assassination on the way. And when Festus—knowing but little and caring less about the merits of the case, desirous of pleasing the Jews and indifferent to the fate of his prisoner—proposed to him that he go back to Jerusalem, Paul, feeling that his last refuge from Jewish hate was in Roman justice, replied to Festus in these manly words: "I stand at Cæsar's judgment-seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, *as thou very well knowest.* For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die; but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, *no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Cæsar.*" Festus must have felt keenly the rebuke conveyed in the sublime language of his great prisoner. This, of

course, was an end of the proceedings at Cæsarea. If the course of Festus had been worthy of a man and a magistrate, this appeal to Cæsar would have been unnecessary. The case was now transferred to Rome, and thither must the prisoner go. It was while awaiting at Cæsarea his transmission to Rome that he made his memorable speech before Agrippa, who declared that he was an innocent man, and added that he could then be released if he had not appealed to Cæsar. After some delay he was sent to Rome, and he found himself a prisoner in the city of the Cæsars, where he was destined to meet his doom. The malice that had assailed him at Jerusalem and pursued him to Cæsarea followed him to Rome and to death. Hear the grand old Christian hero as he beholds the sun of his life almost setting

behind the hills of the imperial city, and the ax of the Roman executioner gleaming before his eyes: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

It is an insult to the human understanding and a libel against the human race to doubt the honesty of such a man with such a record. And if his life was sincere and his record true, Christianity cannot be false.

IV.

Conclusion.

CAN we honestly consult our own consciousness—our knowledge of men and the motives and influences that govern their lives and control their actions—without a profound conviction that Peter and Paul were moved, inspired, and sustained by a power higher, better, and mightier than themselves? Nor does the history of Christianity confine the operation of the Spirit and the power that moved and animated them to the times or the age in which they lived. Ever since its advent into the world it has been lifting man from the degradation and corruption of sin and planting his feet upon a rock, cleansing and purifying his heart, transforming and en-

nobling his moral nature, and turning him from the highways of evil into the paths of usefulness and righteousness. The same power that took Simon Peter from the humble avocation of a fisherman, and converted him into the apostle of the Jews, and made his name illustrious and his works immortal, has wrought similar transformations in other men of later times whose origin was as humble and whose early surroundings were as unpromising as his, and whose efforts and achievements in behalf of the cause for which he lived and died have been scarcely less marked and less powerful than his.

Melanchthon, who has been called the theologian of the Reformation of the sixteenth century, came from an armorer's shop; Martin Luther, its acknowledged leader and head, was the son of a

humble miner; and Zwingle, the great Swiss reformer, came from a lowly hut amid the solitude of the Alps. This was the triumvirate, who under God defied popes and emperors and armies, shook Rome to its foundations, and rocked Europe in the arms of a moral earthquake. Who can read the history of that wonderful movement, and believe that the mighty results accomplished against the fearful odds encountered were conceived, inspired, and consummated by these humble men, and that God was not in it at all?

No man ever had a humbler origin than Martin Luther. The following graphic account of his birth and the circumstances under which he first saw the light, from the pen of Thomas Carlyle, is not unworthy of reproduction: "Luther's birthplace was Eisleben, in Sax-

ony. He came into the world there on the 10th of November, 1483. It was an accident that gave this honor to Eisleben. His parents, poor mine-laborers in a village of that region, named Mohra, had gone to Eisleben Winter Fair. In the tumult of this scene the Frau Luther was taken with travail, found refuge in some poor house there, and the boy she bore was named Martin Luther. Strange enough to reflect upon it! This poor Frau Luther, she had gone with her husband to make her small merchandisings, perhaps to sell the lock of yarn she had been spinning to buy the small winter necessaries for her narrow hut or household. In the whole world that day there was not a more entirely unimportant-looking pair of people than this miner and his wife. And yet what were all emperors, popes,

and potentates in comparison? There was born here once more a mighty man, whose light was to flame as the beacon over long centuries and epochs of the world; the whole world and its history were waiting for this man. It is strange, it is great. It leads us back to another birth-hour, in a still meaner environment, eighteen hundred years ago, of which it is fit that we *say* nothing, but that we think only in silence; for what words are there? The age of miracles past? The age of miracles is forever here!"

A poor boy, with weak health, modest and retiring in his disposition, shrinking from contact and antagonism with others—whose eye but God's could have discerned the vast possibilities that lay entombed in his marvelous future? While at school he had, in common

with other poor boys of his station, to beg and sing for bread from door to door. His father intended him for the law. Man proposes, but God disposes. When about nineteen years of age, by the sudden death of a young friend to whom he was much attached, he was led to serious reflection, and formed the resolution to devote himself to the service of God. Against the wishes and remonstrances of his father, he became a monk in an Augustine convent. There he had to perform the most menial drudgery, while the spiritual struggle that went on in his soul was something fearful to think of. He finally stumbled on an old Latin Bible in the convent. He had never seen one before. But the groper in darkness had at last found a light which was ever after to prove a lamp to his feet. It

led him through ways and pointed him to heights of which he had never dreamed, but he followed its pure and steady ray whithersoever it beckoned him. Among those who have had faith in the word of God and relied upon that, and that alone, in the midst of all trials, all dangers, all oppositions, all persecutions, Martin Luther is entitled to a place in the front line.

Menaced by the thunders of Rome—the assassin's dagger whetted for his heart, hunted from place to place like a wild beast, with a price set upon his head—he fearlessly proclaimed the truth as he found it in the pure word of God, in the face of all that men or devils could devise to intimidate and destroy him. Under the maledictions of Rome, in the very teeth of the pope, hear him: "I am free by the grace of God, and

bulls neither console nor alarm me. *My strength and my consolation are in a place where neither men nor devils can reach them.*"

Through the spiritual darkness of the Middle Ages, through the hoary abuses and corruptions of centuries, in defiance of the bulls of popes and the edicts of emperors, this humble son of a poor miner, armed alone with the sword of the Spirit—for he refused utterly to fight with any other weapon—cut a channel from the human heart back to the bosom of its God. Since Christ stood before Pilate, since Peter stood before the Sanhedrim, since Paul stood before Agrippa, the grandest moral spectacle which this old earth has ever witnessed was Martin Luther before the Diet of Worms. In the presence of emperors and kings and potentates—

all the power and pomp of civil authority, re-enforced by the ecclesiastical omnipotence of Rome—he stood, one poor solitary man, with the demand made upon him to retract his religion or forfeit his life! His answer will ring along the corridors of time until it mingles with the funeral-notes of the last trumpet that proclaims the end of the world: "Since your serene majesty and your high mightinesses require from me a clear, simple, and precise answer, I will give you one, and it is this: I can not submit my faith either to the pope or the councils, because it is as clear as the day that they have frequently erred and contradicted each other. Unless therefore I am convinced by the testimony of the Scripture or by the clearest reasoning—unless I am persuaded by means of the passages I have

quoted, and unless they thus render my conscience bound by the word of God—I can not and will not retract; for it is unsafe for a Christian to speak against his conscience." Then surveying the august presence which surrounded him, he concluded: "Here I stand, I can do no otherwise; may God help me! Amen!"

And there he stood, the poor miner's son, before all that proud and imposing array of civil and ecclesiastical power, the grandest figure in the whole group, the aureole of the victor encircling his brow and even his enemies unable to suppress the admiration which his sublime courage and fearless bearing extorted. Eternity alone can reveal the far-reaching consequences of that memorable day's memorable victory of a humble soldier of the cross against the allied armies of a continent. Had he faltered,

who can tell the effect of his defeat upon the fortunes of Christianity and humanity? That he did not falter, that he did not fall, is thus explained in a few simple words: "In the hall of the Diet there was one greater than Charles and greater than Luther. *When 'ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, . . . take no thought how or what ye shall speak,'* said Jesus Christ, '*for it is not ye that speak.*' Never, perhaps, had this promise been more clearly fulfilled."

The life and career of Luther mark an epoch in history from which the hand of God can not be excluded, and the great events, the mighty results to which it gave birth be satisfactorily accounted for. He saw the Church of God in meretricious alliance with the State and in guilty dalliance with the

world, clad in the robes of earthly splendor purchased in exchange for her virtue. Her resuscitation, her resurrection from the tomb of moral decay and spiritual death became the passion of his soul, the inspiration of his life. But who was he, this humble monk, coming from the seclusion of his cell, armed only with his old Latin Bible covered with the dust and cobwebs of years, to open its long-neglected and forgotten pages and proclaim its immortal truths in the face of Leo X. and Charles V.? How dare he antagonize or seek to reform the ancient ecclesiasticism of Rome that had enthralled the minds and consciences of men for centuries, and forged manacles for the rulers of States until kings and emperors bowed to her scepter and trembled at her nod; the mighty or-

ganization that grasped in one hand the power of the world to protect the Church, and with the other the authority of heaven to defend her temporal allies? Who could stand before such a foe and live? Was it any thing short of madness for one frail man to defy such a power? Ay, it would have been the sheerest madness but for the power that impelled and sustained him. But with this power, unseen but felt wherever he disseminated his translations of his old Latin Bible and preached the everlasting word, he changed the face of Christendom. A corrupt and sensual priesthood for many long and weary years had lorded it over God's heritage, and so perverted all that was sacred and holy that merchandise was made of the salvation of the souls of men, and remission of sins sold in market overt.

It seemed that the religion of Jesus Christ had been well-nigh banished from the world, and that the pope of Rome had supplanted the Saviour of mankind. But at the preaching of the word in its simplicity and truth all Christendom was stirred to the bottom, and the popular heart rose responsive to the new invocation, "like the ocean, which, when the hand of God presses its surface, rises calm and majestic along its shores, so that no human power is able to resist its progress." The spirit that burned in the heart of Peter on the Day of Pentecost and transformed Paul at Damascus was once more asserting its influence and power over the hearts and minds of men and molding their lives in accordance with the word of God. The yoke of Rome was broken from the necks of men and nations;

the dead revived; the priest, who had impiously obtruded himself between the human heart and God, was thrust aside by an unseen but no trembling hand; liberty was proclaimed to the captives; "each head of a family again became priest in his own house; and all the members of the Church of God were thenceforward called to the rank of confessors." The weapons of the warfare which produced these marvelous results were—indeed, must have been—mighty; but were not, could not have been, carnal. That hand obeyed not its own cunning, but was Heaven-directed, that unlocked the iron doors of the ecclesiastical bastile in which the Bible had been so long immured, and sent it forth to feed the starving souls of men, to enlighten the nations, and to bless the world. Let it never be for-

gotten that Martin Luther in his mighty work claimed no power of his own, but leaned with an unfaltering faith upon the arm of God alone, refusing all other aid but the pure and simple gospel of Jesus Christ. When Ulrich von Hütten and others offered to draw the sword in defense of the great and imperiled Reformation at whose head Luther stood by common consent, he promptly and emphatically declined the proffered aid in words that should never die: "By the word the world has been conquered; by the word the Church has been saved; by the word, too, she will be restored. I do not despise your offers, *but I will not lean upon any one but Christ.*" Under the cant of "progress" he made no attempt to improve the gospel or hide from the eyes of men a loss of faith in the promises of God. He regarded it

as no part of the duty of the Church of God to conform to what is called the spirit of the age that it may win success and swell its numbers, and in this way enhance its importance in the eyes of men; but to plant itself upon the eternal word with a firm reliance upon the promises of God, and thus bring the spirit of the age under the dominion of the gospel. It has always proved an evil day for the Church when, losing faith in the efficiency of the gospel to contend with the powers of darkness, she has stretched forth her hand to the State and asked her aid and assistance in suppressing evil and advancing the cause of God. The hand of Cæsar has never been anointed by God to take charge of his Church and lead it on to successful warfare against the sins of the world. And whenever the Church

seeks an alliance or partnership with the State to advance the kingdom of God and his righteousness, the result is a much larger infusion of the spirit of the world into the Church than of the Spirit of God into the world. Whenever the Church, in her struggles against the crimes and wickedness of the times, falls back from her intrenched position behind the word of God, and calls on the State for re-enforcements, the world derides her faith in God, and instead of advancing his cause by these forbidden means, she lowers her holy flag until the world no longer respects its sanctity. Whenever the minister of the gospel leaves his pulpit and mounts the stump to harangue promiscuous crowds as to how they ought to vote on questions of State policy, or stands in his pulpit and, instead of dispensing the

word of God, takes a text from the Holy Scriptures and, warping it from its true meaning, compels it to do duty in enforcing some political question, telling his congregation how he proposes to vote on the question; and endeavors to prove from his violated text how they ought to vote—whatever his motive may be, whatever evil he may seek to repress, whatever Christian virtue he may seek to promote, he will find in the end that he has inflicted upon himself and his Master's cause an injury far transcending any good he has been able to do by the more than questionable course he has seen fit to adopt. No matter what evil he desires to remove by inducing the State to pass laws for its suppression, he can not pursue the course indicated without an impairment of ministerial character and influence. He

has not been appointed to fight sin and promote righteousness in that way, and men of the world know it if he does not. The weapons placed in his hands are not carnal. The commission to him is to preach—preach what? Preach *my gospel —preach that,* "and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." In his zeal he may imagine that the political party which promises to pass this, that, or the other law, to put down this, that, or the other sin, is the crowd for him to train with, shout in their ranks, mount the hustings, or it may be his pulpit, in their behalf, and figure as a delegate in their conventions; but he will discover that a sober, deliberate public opinion will regard him as out of place, and there will be a consequent loss of confidence in him as a preacher of the gospel and of reverence for his

sacred calling on the part of many whose good opinion is worth having and whose souls are worth saving. The people who entertain respect for the Christian religion, whether they belong to the Church or not, have invested the office of the Christian ministry with a sanctity that surrounds no mere secular calling. The man who pursues the high vocation of a preacher of the gospel must be careful to do nothing which will forfeit this respect and reverence for his office. His reputation is as sensitive and susceptive as that of a woman, and he can not treat it lightly or expose it heedlessly to criticism with any greater impunity than a woman can sport with her virtue. The facility with which some preachers drop into politics is lamentable. It seems so much easier for them to become entan-

gled in the mazes of political contention than it is for the politician to embrace Christianity. If the political question has a tinge of morality upon it, this seems ample warrant to them to enter the lists and display themselves as politicians, just as a few animals attached to a circus sanctify the show. But what right has a minister of the gospel to cross the line that separates religion from politics, destroy the influence which is essential to his success in winning souls, and thus erect impassable barriers and throw unnecessary impediments between himself and those to whom he has been commissioned to preach the gospel? That he has the legal right under our system of government to do so is of course not questioned, but as a watchman on the walls of Zion, whether he is in the line of

duty in so doing is another matter. Is not the pulpit sufficient in its scope and duties and responsibilities to employ all his time and talents? Peter and Paul, and the most consecrated and illustrious heralds of the cross who have followed in their footsteps, have found the work of the Church and the preaching of the gospel sufficient to enlist and absorb all the energies of mind and soul and body. Alas for the preacher of to-day who finds such a sphere too contracted for the employment and display of all his powers, and has ample time and inclination to exchange the pulpit for the stump, the congregation for the crowd, songs of praise for the shouts of the excited multitude, and the loving message of the gospel for the bitter partisan denunciations which almost invariably constitute the warp and woof of the

political preacher's fierce harangue! If he could see himself as others see him —which he can not, as he is blind in that eye—the "Rum-Romanism-Rebellion" actors on the political stage would become more conspicuous for their absence.

If the suppression of sin, if the spread of the gospel, if the conversion of the world depended, or had ever depended, on such laws as the Church might induce or compel the State to enact, the grave of Christianity would have been located so far in the dim and forgotten past that the finger of tradition would hesitate to point out the spot where it slept. If Christianity has lived and flourished and pushed its conquests under the most cruel laws that human ingenuity could invent to suppress it, surely in this land of broad toleration

the Church ought to be able to exercise sufficient faith in the promise of God that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" to prevent it from courting and demanding State recognition and legislative aid to enable it to fight sin and convert the souls of men. The words of Lord Macaulay on this line are commended no less for their truth than their beauty: "The ark of God was never taken until it was surrounded by the arms of earthly defenders. In captivity its sanctity was sufficient to vindicate it from insults, and to lay the hostile fiend prostrate on the threshold of his own temple. The real security of Christianity is to be found in its benevolent morality, in its exquisite adaptation to the human heart, in the facility with which its scheme accommodates itself to the capacity of every hu-

man intellect, in the consolation which it bears to the house of mourning, in the light with which it brightens the great mystery of the grave. To such a system it can bring no addition of dignity or strength that it is part and parcel of the common law. It is not now for the first time left to rely on the force of its own evidences and the attractions of its own beauty. Its sublime philosophy confounded the Grecian schools in the fair conflict of reason with reason. The bravest and wisest of the Cæsars found their arms and their policy unavailing when opposed to the weapons that were not carnal and the kingdom that was not of this world. The victory which Porphyry and Diocletian failed to gain is not, to all appearances, reserved for any of those who have in this age directed their attacks against

the last restraint of the powerful and the last hope of the wretched. The whole history of the Christian religion shows that she is in far greater danger of being corrupted by the alliance of power than of being crushed by its opposition. Those who thrust temporal sovereignty upon her treat her as their prototypes treated her Author. They bow the knee, and spit upon her; they cry, 'Hail!' and smite her on the cheek; they put a scepter into her hand, but it is a fragile reed; they crown her, but it is with thorns; they cover with purple the wounds which their own hands have inflicted on her, and inscribe magnificent titles over the cross on which they have fixed her to perish in ignominy and pain."

Perhaps the strongest plea that could be made and the most plausible reasons

that could be urged for the Church of God to stretch forth her hands for the aid and assistance of temporal power are contained in the words which a recent writer puts in the mouth of Eusebius of Cæsarea, in his effort to induce the persecuted Christians of Rome to take sides with Constantine in his endeavor to overthrow Maxentius and grasp imperial power at Rome: "It is agreed upon common consent, both from the character of the Emperor Constantine and from the fact that no persecution of Christians hath been permitted by him or his father, that we may safely rely on his pledge to protect the Church upon the conditions stated. Ye know, brethren, that from the days in which our Lord tabernacled in the flesh, even until this hour, the Church hath been bleeding at every pore. Ten different

times, under ten different emperors, persecution hath taken the form of laws for the destruction of Christianity, and the followers of Jesus have been tried beyond all human endurance. The question therefore, in brief, is simply whether the Church shall give aid to Constantine for the recovery of his rightful heritage in exchange for his imperial protection, and be enabled to come forth in the broad light of day, and proclaim without fear or molestation the gospel of our Lord; or whether we shall contumaciously reject proffered peace and protection, and thereby justify the accusation of the pagans that we Christians are inspired with a hatred of the human race, and, as a natural consequence, continue to suffer from the hatred and persecutions of the world, which have been so grievous

ever since Diocletian issued the edicts for our destruction in the years 303 and 304, which hard laws the present emperor, Maxentius, strictly enforceth everywhere, so that neither at home nor on the way, nor even beneath the surface of the earth, hath any Christian assurance for his life. When I think of how the Church must triumph under the imperial protection, how, in place of being outcast, persecuted, and despised, she would at once become honorable and respectable in the eyes of the heathen; when I think of what vast opportunities for greater good the emperor's favor will afford, it seems to me that it would be mere madness and fanaticism to reject these overtures of peace and protection, and willfully cast aside the honor, wealth, power, and glory which the long and sorely perse-

cuted Church must begin to gather as the fruits of the proposed alliance."

Did ever ecclesiastical ambition have a finer field on which to display its powers? Although this argument of Eusebius be merely imaginary, it would be very difficult to conceive of a more cogent and powerful appeal to the Church of God to throw aside her faith in his promises, forget that his kingdom was not of this world, and look to Constantine for that which God has proclaimed she must expect from him alone. Surely it would seem, as we look at it with our natural eyes, that the Christians of those days, despised and persecuted as they were, had ample reason to court the favor and recognition and place themselves under the protection of an emperor who would not persecute them, and under whose kind toleration

they could aspire to a state more honorable and respectable in the world. So the Church of God and Constantine the Great embraced each other—God and his promises being ignored in the alliance. Let all political preachers, and the Churches into whose councils the accursed spirit of worldly ambition has crept or is creeping, read history and ponder the consequences of an abandonment of faith in God and an invocation to the State to perform the work of the Spirit. For, disguise it as we may, it is only when the Church has lost faith in God that she turns a despairing eye to the State for help.

St. Paul says the powers that be are ordained of God. Let God and those powers whom he has ordained be trusted with the management of the affairs of States and nations; and let the Church

of the living God give the pure and unadulterated word to the people, and confine itself to its appointed work of saving the souls of men in the manner pointed out in the word of God. The past is eloquent with warnings of the decay of spiritual power that has followed a departure by the Church from the path marked out for her to tread. How often has her benign and heavenly light been obscured by ecclesiastical ambition! and how deeply and how sorely has she been wounded by the hands of those appointed to guard her interests, who have led her into ways her great Head never intended her to enter! Indeed, it may be said with entire truth that the divine nature, the imperishable character of Christianity, is as clearly demonstrated by the fact that it has survived the mistakes and

crimes of its real and its pretended friends as that it has been able to withstand the oft-repeated assaults of its open and avowed enemies.

The men who have been the instruments of the greatest reforms and the profoundest results in their endeavors to establish the kingdom of heaven in the world have been those who, holding themselves aloof from all entangling alliances with political and civil affairs, have preached the gospel of Jesus Christ in its purity and simplicity; and when thus preached it has always proved to be, and always will prove to be, the power of God for the salvation of men from sins of every character, in high places or low; otherwise it is a mournful and melancholy failure.

John Wesley, of whom it has been truly said, "He breathed into the nos-

trils of English-speaking Protestantism, and it became a living soul," was a consecrated man of one work. To what uninspired man rises there along the track of history a grander monument than that which bears the name of the great founder of Methodism? Judged by results, the movement with which the name of John Wesley stands inseparably united must claim prominent recognition among the great events of history. The great religious awakening which, under the name of Methodism, owes its rise to Wesley, though wonderful in the results already accomplished, has the promise of a mightier future which nothing short of prophetic power can adequately presage if those having its interests in charge are true to the eternal principles on which it was founded. How much more wisely

its founder builded than he knew is apparent to all who will trace the successive steps by which it has been led from its small beginnings to its present grand and commanding position. That it was not strangled in its infancy and consigned to the tomb, with no hope of a resurrection, must be referred to the fact that God was in it. It were a lengthy task to recount what Wesley suffered and what he overcame. It is the fate of all great reformers to encounter the blind and stubborn hate and active opposition of established custom and canonized error. Paul encountered the hate of Judaism, Luther of Romanism, and Wesley met in nearly every form short of death the malice of the Established Church. And never did Paul feel more acutely the hate of the Jew, or Luther the malice

of Rome, than Wesley was made to experience the venom of the Established Church, of which he was a regularly-ordained minister. Through spite and malice and mobs and ridicule and contempt and disparagement and a thousand degrading persecutions, the hardest for flesh and blood to bear—often deserted by friends and always sorely pressed by an army of enemies—the grand old hero marched forward with an unfaltering step to the accomplishment of the great mission which he felt, and never doubted, God had committed to his hands. But even in his great life, filled as it was with sublime devotion to his Master's work, there is a passage which stands out as a monumental warning to all preachers of the gospel who feel tempted to add to their great commission a dispensation allow-

ing them to engage in party strife and political contentions.

In 1775 the English people were profoundly excited over the condition of affairs existing between England and her American colonies. Dr. Johnson lent the service of his powerful pen to the cause of the mother country in the struggle, and published a treatise against the colonies entitled "Taxation no Tyranny," intended as an answer to the address of the American Congress. Johnson was a bitter and malignant enemy of the colonies and a most intense loyalist. On one occasion he is reported to have said of the people on this side the water: "Sir, they are a race of convicts, and ought to be thankful for any thing we allow them short of hanging." No sooner had the publication of Johnson appeared than Mr.

Wesley hastened to publish an abridgment of it, under the title of "A Calm Address to our American Colonies. By Rev. Mr. John Wesley, M. A. Price one penny," thus giving his sanction and indorsement to the work of Johnson, or rather putting it forth as his own, as there was no intimation whatever contained in Mr. Wesley's tract that the production was not his own. No act of Mr. Wesley's life, crowded as it was with persecutions of nearly all shades and degrees, ever drew down upon him such a storm of opposition and stinging criticism and ridicule as this incursion by him into the field of politics. Pamphlets denunciatory of his conduct, and branding him as a renegade and a plagiarist, fell upon him in showers. His other persecutions came upon him while in the line of his duty

in preaching the gospel, and he could lean with supreme confidence on this assurance, "Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, *for my sake;*" but he had no right to seek this refuge from the storm that now beat furiously upon him. Of course the colonists had many friends and relatives in England, and the feeling amongst them against Wesley, and by an easy transition against Methodism, was intense and bitter. It would be difficult at this time to accurately estimate the damage to Mr. Wesley and the injury to Methodism consequent upon this rash and injudicious step. Methodism had already secured a foothold in America, and was expanding as the country grew. This political adventure of its great founder threatened

to wreck and overwhelm it in its infancy. It was the great mistake of Mr. Wesley's life; and yet, strangely enough, during the very year he was himself guilty of the lamentable indiscretion of precipitating himself, and of necessity the great religious movement which he had inaugurated, into the exciting contest between the mother country and her colonies we find him penning this wise and judicious advice to his preachers in America: "*Dear Brethren:* You were never in your lives in so critical a situation as you are at this time. It is your part to be peace-makers, to be loving and tender to all; but to addict yourselves to no party. In spite of all solicitation, of rough or smooth words, say not one word against one side or the other side. Keep yourselves; do all you can to help and soften all; but be-

ware how you adopt another's jar." How much better it would have been if he himself had followed the counsel he gave to the Methodist preachers of America! It was idle to impress upon them the necessity and wisdom of acting discreetly, whilst he himself was plunging into the angry waters of political strife in England. Of course his actions and utterances found their way across the Atlantic, and the struggling bands of Methodism felt the shock of his example. It was not long before this country became an uncomfortable place for Wesley's English itinerants, and they left for the mother country, all save Francis Asbury. Asbury held the fort, and by his prudence and wisdom and superhuman labors saved American Methodism from the mistake of its founder. For forty-five years he

bore the banner of Methodism through the wilds of America, amid dangers, hardships, and sufferings that make his life read more like a story of romance than of real life. Grander than the campaigns of Hannibal or Cæsar or Napoleon were the wonderful journeys of Asbury as he bore the gospel through the American wilderness. During the American Revolution his journal is authority for the statement that Wesley's political tracts were a great hinderance and stumbling-block to the spread of Methodism in this country. And is it any wonder? Has the preacher in politics ever proved otherwise than a hinderance and a stumbling-block or a bull in a China-shop? Wesley did George III. no good by his political tracts, but he did John Wesley and both English and American Methodism great harm.

But this was only an episode in Wesley's laborious and consecrated life. In the great movement with which his immortal name is imperishably connected the weapons of his warfare were drawn from the same armory that supplied Peter and Paul and Luther, and they were found sufficient. He received his orders from the same head-quarters from which theirs emanated, and gave to them the same implicit faith and unchallenged obedience. The bands of preachers—many of them unlearned men like Peter and his fellow-fishermen, but with hearts fully consecrated to God—which he organized and sent out to preach the gospel and minister to the spiritual wants of England's neglected people, did for that nation what all her acts of Parliament and the skill and wisdom of her ministry could not have accomplished. By

their labors and zeal and earnestness they brought the hearts of the masses under the influence of the gospel, and the atheism which deluged France was unable to cross the channel and inundate England.

The doors of all the English churches were bolted and barred against him. When he determined to preach the gospel in its purity, and to reform a Church that had become too subservient to the corrupt spirit of the times to bear the preaching of her own doctrine, and to redeem a land in which infidelity seemed almost endemic, he became a clerical outlaw, so far as prelatical pride and ecclesiastical bigotry could make him one. But following in the footsteps of his Master, with a zeal that never failed, a purpose that never wavered, and a patience that never tired, he lived to see

the mobs that greeted him with insults and derision stand uncovered before him, and the church-doors that were slammed in his face fly open to receive him.

He had conquered a peace and revindicated the ways of God to man. The work he inaugurated still grows and deepens and widens, and will so continue to increase until those who have it in charge shall prove false to its traditional glory and unworthy of the sacred trust committed to their hands.

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